Chronicles

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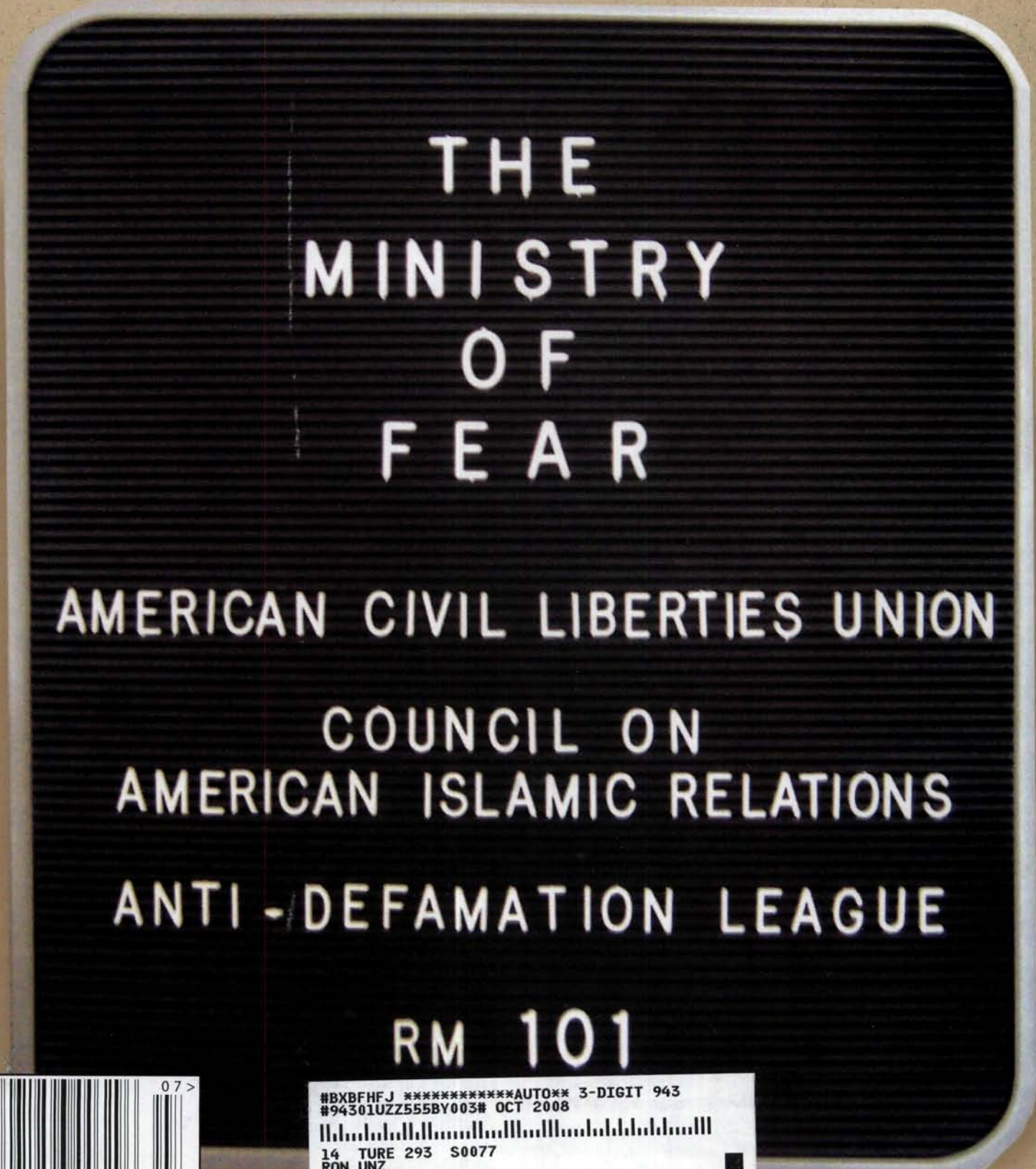

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Islam is doubtless the greatest threat to Western civilization, but it is not the only one. Today, China is an economic threat; tomorrow, a military one. Cultural afflictions from "gay marriage" to anti-Christian hate groups are destroying us from within. Today, would the heroes of the Alamo find the civilization they died to defend?

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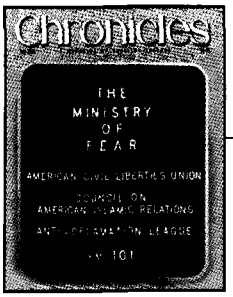

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On Taxation

Kudos for your April 2004 issue on taxation ("Just Say No!"). Thomas Fleming's "Tax Slavery" (*Perspective*) and David Hartman's "Revolting Taxation" (*Views*) were right on the mark. I recently retired after 31 years and 8 months as a bottom-feeding, leg-breaking parasite (IRS revenue officer) for Godzilla, née Leviathan. The main thing I learned over all those years is never to underestimate the servility of the American people.

Although public education (primarily training to love the unitary state) and mass entertainment (various levels of pornography) have contributed to this state of affairs, I believe that direct taxation of individual income is the main culprit.

Income taxation is founded on three legs. The first and most important is the middle-class acceptance of the socialist ideology of envy, based on hatred of the rich. The second leg is withholding at the source. A more pernicious evil would be hard to dream up. Who in his right mind would voluntarily pay over to the national government that which is taken by force? And the third leg is punishment: swift, total, brutal, and, most of all, public. Fear is a wonderful administrative tool for collecting taxes.

Since the Revenue and Restructuring Act of 1998, the last leg, punishment, has fallen on hard times. Absent a few liens and levies on wages and bank accounts, most of the pre-1998 enforcement has been suspended. The IRS has taken a therapeutic road instead: We are a *service*; we are here to help you; we feel your pain; we'll walk you through the process so you can pay your fair share of taxes; we'll make the forms easier to understand; and so on, *ad nauseam*.

Rest assured, though, that the system is in no danger of collapse as long as the first leg remains a part of the middle-class psyche. The second leg would be in danger only if large corporations and employers (the true tax collectors) stopped withholding. That is unlikely to happen. Besides, the punishment pendulum will swing back when Congress starts complaining that revenues have fallen.

I believe that the middle class can be weaned from individual income tax if they see alternative systems such as a Value-Added Tax or a national sales tax to be in their financial interest. Until then, nothing will change.

The IRS is simply the process. The real problem is the income tax itself, the cash cow of the political class. As long as Americans waste their time complaining about and seeking to "reform" the IRS but do not ever question the philosophical basis of the income tax, the politicians are happy. They dread the day when the middle class wakes up to their theft.

And remember the party line: We have a voluntary system of taxation in the United States! Yeah, right. Try telling that to the revenue officer who is taking your assets or the revenue agent who is auditing your income-tax returns.

—*Paul R. Peters*
Sherman, CT

On Outsourcing

As a faithful reader of *Chronicles*, I was sorely disappointed to see Tom Piatak's "Outsourcing Our Future" (*American Proscenium*, May). Mr. Piatak takes the ridiculous but all-too-oft-repeated stance that, when Americans "lose" jobs to overseas workers, America suffers.

He appears to have forgotten one of the fundamental lessons of economics: the lesson of comparative advantage, which tells us that, when jobs are done by those who do them most efficiently, everybody wins. If "American jobs" go overseas, this leaves Americans free to do things that they are more suited to do.

The question is, Why are engineers overseas apparently more efficient than American engineers? Perhaps the answer is that American workers are not allowed to compete with overseas engineers. *Wage* is nothing more than a term for the price of labor. A government-mandated minimum wage is a price floor on labor. If there are two markets for a good (*e.g.*, labor), one with a price floor and one without, it is likely that purchasers (*i.e.*, employers) will go to the market that offers a better product for a lower price. In this case, purchasers have decided that overseas engineers produce better labor for a more efficient price.

Mr. Piatak appears to believe that the way to improve America's economy and

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to make us more efficient is to restrict free trade even further. I think that it makes more sense to remove the price floor on labor—that is, to abolish the minimum wage. Freer trade is always better.

—*Heidi C. Morris*
Hillsdale, MI

Mr. Piatak Replies:

I am delighted that Miss Morris is a faithful reader of *Chronicles* and thank her for her able summary of the free-trade ideology taught in many economics classes. The problem with this theory is one that besets many theories: It cannot be reconciled with reality.

As Pat Buchanan points out in *The Great Betrayal*, the United States would still be a provider of agricultural goods to an economically powerful Great Britain if we had followed free-trade ideology. Great Britain certainly had a "comparative advantage" in manufactured goods in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Fortunately, George Washington and Alexander Hamilton recognized that America's political independence required economic independence and erected tariffs that both shielded American manufacturers from British competition and brought in all the tax revenues needed to finance a very small federal government. American statesmen followed the wisdom of Washington and Hamilton well into the 20th century, resulting in an economy that was not only the world's strongest but its freest. By contrast, the greatest apostles of free trade in American history were Woodrow Wilson, who gave us the income tax, and FDR, who set us firmly on the road toward the massive and intrusive federal government we have today.

Free-trade ideology requires a country to be prepared to lose entire industries forever if a competitor enjoys a temporary advantage in price, even if that advantage is an artificial one created by foreign subsidies and even if the cost of the loss of such industries is massive unemployment, which inevitably results in a demand for more social services from government. No country can become or long remain great by consistently following such a course, which is why even advocates of free trade have regularly resorted to quotas, tariffs, and bilateral agreements restricting imports.

Being a consistent ideologue, Miss Morris suggests that America will be better off if her engineers lose their jobs to Indian ones or end up working for salaries approaching those paid in India. Absent from Miss Morris' reasoning is any recognition that not all jobs are equally important to the nation. If America loses her engineering jobs, she also largely loses her ability to create new products or improve existing ones, not to mention her ability to maintain a defense industry capable of protecting our independence. Before jumping to such an absurd conclusion, Miss Morris would do well to reexamine the ideology that led her to reach it.

On Prejudices

It should go without saying in a magazine such as *Chronicles*, but apparently it does not: Contrary to Srdja Trifkovic's "Europe and America" (*Views*, May), Mother Teresa deserves better than to be grouped alongside murderers and charlatans such as Mao, Che, Ho, and Mandela; and, if Dr. Trifkovic believes service in the Third World renders one a fool of the same order as pop Princess Di, then it is hard to see why he spends so much time lamenting the loss of the Christian Faith, of which Mother Teresa was an exemplar.

I am often in agreement with Dr. Trifkovic, but here his Balkan prejudices, however usually well founded, have gotten the better of him.

—*Fred Kelly*
Monroe, NY

Dr. Trifkovic Replies:

I do not pretend that my "Balkan prejudices," or any other of which I may be accused (philo-Hellenic, pre-New-Deal-American, Christian, anti-E.U.-European) are absent from my *Weltanschauung*, but I endeavor to be aware of them.

That they are an integral part of who and what I am goes without saying. Those who claim to be free from prejudice would have you believe that they love your children as passionately as their own. They are lying, or they are mad, or both.

I am sorry that Mr. Kelly sees my somewhat unkind reference to Mother Teresa as an expression of those "prejudices." I wish that he had see it as a Rockfordesquely "insensitive"—that is, honest—expression of my considered opinion that she was a manipulative and therefore corrupt woman of uncertain motives who enjoyed grandstanding in the global media circus in a manner unworthy of a would-be saint. The incident of her birth and ethnicity is irrelevant to this assessment, which I would prefer to elaborate elsewhere if necessary, and for which I am certain to be judged when the time comes.

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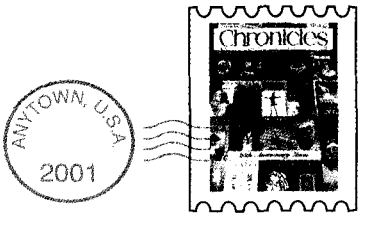

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by Samuel Francis

Porno War

Just how high did authorization go for the Abu Ghraib "abuses," as the deliberate torture and sexual humiliation of Iraqi prisoners by American troops are demurely called? Was it really, as President Bush claimed in his flatulent "address to the nation" in May, a mere case of "disgraceful conduct by a few American troops who dishonored our country and disregarded our values," or were the people who really did the dishonoring and disregarding by authorizing and encouraging what happened on a far higher level than the trailer-trash grunts elevated to global celebrity by the dirty pictures in which they leer and smirk at their victims?

And why were the photographs taken in the first place? Are they simply barracks-room pornography for an Army riddled by the same pathologies that eat through the muscle of American society? Are enlisted men and women really so dim as to think they can take scores of photos of themselves engaging in conduct both grotesque and illegal and not get caught and punished? Or was there another purpose behind taking the photographs that few have yet grasped?

Pfc. Lynndie England, the new poster girl of the U.S. occupation of Iraq who has replaced Jessica Lynch as the iconic American Amazon, gave an interview to KCNC-TV in Denver soon after being hauled back to this country to face charges. Pfc. England has every motive to lie her little behind off to get out of those charges, and what she says by itself may be no more than a lie. But then again, maybe it's not, and it is worth considering, especially in conjunction with other information.

"I was instructed by persons in higher rank to 'stand there, hold this leash, look at the camera,' and they took pictures for PsyOps," she told the station. PsyOps? Psychological Operations, of course. Well, wasn't the purpose of the abuse and the photos to twist information out of the prisoners, in accordance with misguided military-intelligence directions?

In part, no doubt it was, and that is insidious enough, as well as stupid. Assuming that rank-and-file prisoners have any useful information about Iraqi resistance operations and capacities they are unwilling to spill, there are undoubtedly more efficient ways of getting it out of them. There are the proverbial rack and thumbscrews, which worked well enough for Catholic and Protestant alike for a couple of centuries. There are drugs that both the CIA and the KGB deployed in years past. Finally, there are perfectly harmless and nonintrusive and nonviolent interrogation techniques by which skilled examiners can elicit information and cooperation from most subjects at first unwilling to utter an intelligible sound. But how effective making the subjects crawl around nude on dog leashes with women's underwear on their heads might be for getting important inside dope is a question that the humane sciences have yet to resolve adequately.

So what was the real purpose, if military intelligence wasn't it? As the scandal began to break last May, the *Washington Post* carried a lengthy report on what the abuses mean in terms of their cultural and social impact on the world's Newest Democracy on the Euphrates.

"Not only do the photographs up-end traditional gender roles—homosexuality is a strict taboo in Islam, and women, through practices like veiling, are encouraged to take a demure attitude towards sexual matters—but the casual treatment of nudity itself is offensive to many. In Saudi Arabia, for example, customers in gymnasium locker rooms are admonished not to let others see them as they change," the *Post* commented.

The paper quoted anthropologist Donald Cole, at the American University in Cairo, on what may have been the real purpose of the torture. "The idea is to humiliate people in ways . . . that really affect their manhood, their identity, their notions of shame. It is playing with people's minds." PsyOps. Just so.

By this interpretation, the photographs were neither an orgiastic lark for the grunts nor a desperate effort to collect "intelligence" but part of a campaign of psychological and cultural warfare, aimed not just at the prisoners in Abu Ghraib but at Iraqi—and, more broadly, Arabic—culture itself.

Back in February, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz published an article in the *Washington Post* about the forthcoming "liberation" of women in Iraq that would be one of the main achievements of the American conquest. "The United States is giving special emphasis to helping Iraqi women achieve greater equality and has allocated $27 million for women's programs," he wrote.

"Liberating" women is certainly what we would expect from the crusade to spread "democracy" and its blessings around the globe at the point of our bayonets, but, in traditional societies such as those of Iraq and the Middle East, "liberating" women means psychologically castrating men—the deliberate destruction of the psychic, moral, and cultural spine of the society. By putting women—especially American infidel women who fight in battle, wear men's clothes, and bare their faces—in charge of male Arabs and dishing out sexual sadism, the "abuses" aim at the heart of the patriarchal culture and its symbols of masculinity.

What was going on in Abu Ghraib (and other places) seems to have been more than "abuse" and also more than just "torture." It was an inherent part of the global imperial system that the architects of the war have already designed, a tactic by which we are systematically devastating a culture and the people that culture defines whom architects of the war like Mr. Wolfowitz hate and wish to eradicate far more than the "global democracy" they purport to love. Mr. Wolfowitz's enthusiasm for "liberating" Iraqi women may give us a clue as to just how high the authorization for the abuses went—and who authorized them.

MOVING?

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GAS PRICES are above two dollars per gallon, making the antiwar chant "no blood for oil" sound even more naive than usual. Gasoline prices in Europe and Japan are, as usual, running more than twice American prices.

According to research by the International Energy Agency (IEA), in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund, a sustained $10 per barrel increase in oil prices (from $25 to $35) will result in the OECD as a whole losing 0.4 percent of GDP. Inflation would rise by half a percentage point, and unemployment would also increase. The adverse economic impact would be even greater in developing countries whose economies are more dependent on imported oil. Developing countries are also less able to cope with the financial strain from higher oil-import costs.

The dramatic increase in oil prices over the last year comes from both decreased supply from OPEC and increased demand by China.

OPEC pledged on March 20, 2003, to make up any decrease in oil production resulting from the war in Iraq. By April, however, OPEC was facing the prospect of increased oil exports from a liberated Iraq, which would put downward pressure on world oil prices. The world price was then about $24 per barrel, in the middle of the OPEC price band, which runs for a low of $22 to a high of $28. On April 24, 2004, OPEC decided to cut production by two million barrels per day (mbd). It held to this level until September, when it further cut production quotas from 25.4 mbd to 24.5 mbd. It made another cut, down to 23.5 mbd, at its February 2004 meeting. Prices had already moved above $28 per barrel by the end of 2003, so OPEC's actions must be seen as a concerted effort to push prices higher.

OPEC was founded in Baghdad in 1960, but Iraq currently is not part of the OPEC supply-management system. Iraq is producing at capacity (2.3 mbd), roughly equal to the output of Kuwait, Nigeria, and Venezuela but less than that of Iran and only about 30 percent of Saudi production. Iraq has the second-largest oil reserves in the region but needs substantial capital to develop its potential, which, in turn, requires peace and political stability. France, Russia, and China had been eager to get their hands on Iraqi oil, which is why they favored the survival of Saddam Hussein's regime. American and British firms should now be given the concessions, but it will still take years to bring new production online.

In the meantime, world demand will continue to grow. The U.S. Department of Energy believes that energy use in Asia will double between 2001 and 2025. The IEA reports that the main factor behind this year's surge in world crude-oil prices is China's record oil imports. China, the world's second-largest oil consumer, imported 18 percent more oil in the first quarter of 2004 than a year ago. Indeed, explosive Chinese economic growth has pushed up commodity prices across the board, from iron ore and steel to coal and copper. There is even a worldwide shortage of shipping space to carry goods to and from China.

Oil is expected to maintain its roughly 40-percent share of world energy consumption. There will continue to be a shift to natural gas, coal, and nuclear power for electricity generation. However, as the developing world discovers the wonders of mass automotive mobility and expands its use of aircraft, heavy equipment, railways, and ships, the demand for oil and gasoline will expand. The Department of Energy expects the demand to be met primarily by the development of new oil fields in the Caspian Basin and off the coasts of Latin America and Africa, none of which are particularly secure and stable regions. China has been very aggressive in looking for oil in Central Asia and Africa, one result of which is Beijing's backing of the Sudan regime in its genocide against Christians and other non-Muslim tribes in the oil-rich Upper Nile area.

The United States has large reserves in Alaska and off her coasts but remains politically paralyzed in developing them. Yet the era of cheap oil that allowed Washington to ignore domestic-energy policy is coming to an end. Pressure on Saudi Arabia, the only producer with substantial excess capacity, to boost output by up to 2.0 mbd may bring down prices later this year, but the long-term trend will still be upward. Thus, the struggle for control of this valuable resource will intensify, and the 21st century will undoubtedly see much blood spilled for oil.

—*William R. Hawkins*

CAROLE KEETON STRAYHORN, the Texas state comptroller, has become the new champion of American believers. Her office is charged with determining what groups qualify for exemption from state taxation (including sales taxes, property taxes, and other state levies) as religious organizations. My ancient *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines "religious" as "Imbued with religion, pious, god-fearing, devout . . . ," and this definition appears to be similar to Mrs. Strayhorn's. Still, she has taken the position that no exemption will be granted unless the group applying can demonstrate a belief in "God, gods or a higher power." This appears to go a bit further than our frequently labeled Judeo-Christian tradition and would certainly include classical Greeks, Romans, and Norsemen, but, nevertheless, Mrs. Strayhorn has recently found herself embroiled in controversy and litigation.

Her office sought to deny an exemption to the Ethical Society of Austin because the society, instead of believing in "God, gods or a higher power," according to an account in the *Austin American-Statesman*, "defines its faith through pursuit of ethical ideals and humane behavior rather than worshipping a deity." Unfortunately, a Texas trial court, an appellate court, and the Texas Supreme Court have all refused to uphold Strayhorn's denial of an exemption. Marvelously undeterred by the fact that the litigation has cost the citizens of Texas many times more than the paltry tax the Ethical Society would have paid, Strayhorn has vowed to take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. One can be fairly certain, however, since the three levels of the Texas judiciary have been unanimous, and since the federal courts defer to state courts in matters of interpretation of state law, that there is no chance the Court will agree even to hear the appeal, let alone reverse the Texas courts.

Yet Strayhorn remains gloriously unrepentant. According to the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, her office has issued a press release stating that she would continue her policies and her efforts to de-

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ny exemptions to the Godless, because "[o]therwise, any wannabe cult who dresses up and parades down Sixth Street on Halloween will be applying for an exemption."

Before the U.S. Supreme Court could act, Strayhorn's office attracted national notice by denying a state tax exemption to the Red River Unitarian Universalist Church. The Unitarian-Universalists have congregations throughout the nation, go back a couple of centuries, and, in an earlier incarnation, counted among their members both Presidents Adams (although, at that time, the church still believed in some sort of deity and would have qualified under Strayhorn's rules). They have since become much more ecumenical. According to one Dan Althoff, board president for the Denison, Texas, congregation whose application for tax exemption was rejected, his organization includes "hard-core atheists" as well as "New Agey-type people." Other groups rejected by Strayhorn's office for failure to adhere to a single set of beliefs in "God, gods, or a higher power" include, according to the Fort Worth paper, "a Carrollton, Texas, group of atheists and agnostics, a New Age group in Bastrop, Texas, and the Whispering Star Clan/Temple of Ancient Wisdom, an organization of witches in Copperas Cove, Texas." One of the Texas judges reversing Strayhorn in the Ethical Society case remarked that her standard "fails to include the whole range of belief systems that may, in our diverse and pluralistic society, merit the First Amendment protection."

Instead, then, of deferring to the officials of the Texas government, the Texas courts are borrowing from the broader conceptions of the federal courts, which have, while barring Bible reading and prayer from public schools, often sought to define religion in a manner that goes far beyond that contemplated by the Framers. Perhaps Strayhorn and her office are on what now amounts to a quixotic quest to restore some sense and tradition to the term *religion*. Their chances of success are not good, however, and, as we go to press, Strayhorn's office, probably because of adverse publicity and pressure, has decided to reverse itself and grant the Denison Unitarian-Universalists their exemption. We await further word on the witches and ethical culturists.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

IS PRESIDENT BUSH kidding his conservative base on the "gay marriage" issue? There is no question, if we stay on the road we are on, that the Supreme Court will decide whether Massachusetts can impose its law on the other states. In outlawing Texas' antisodomy law last June, the Court found that homosexuals are "free as adults to engage in their private conduct in the exercise of their liberty under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment" (*Lawrence & Garner* v. *Texas*). So we can safely guess what lies at the end of the road: The Court will find that the other states must recognize Massachusetts' "gay marriages."

"Newlyweds" Chris Bianchi (29) and Dennis Skinner (27) of Rochester, New York, are already starting down the road that they hope leads to the Supreme Court. They "married" in Massachusetts on May 17, when that state became the nation's first to authorize same-sex marriage. "We're very excited," they said. They have now returned to New York and gone down to the Rochester City Hall to have their marriage recognized. Their next step, if they are denied, will be to go to federal district court, where they will argue that the Full Faith and Credit Clause of the Constitution requires each state to accept "the public acts, Records, and Judicial Proceedings" of other states. The Supreme Court, in all likelihood, will ultimately decide that language means the other states must follow Massachusetts law.

Can we get off this road? Can we get this issue off the Supreme Court's docket? There are two ways to do it. One way is impossible; the other one, easy. Guess which one President Bush is pursuing?

The President, the same day Chris and Dennis exchanged their vows, spoke of the impossible one: his proposed constitutional amendment. He said: "The sacred institution of marriage should not be redefined by a few activist judges. All Americans have a right to be heard in this debate, I called on the Congress to pass, and to send to the states for ratification, an amendment to our Constitution defining and protecting marriage as a union of a man and a woman as husband and wife. The need for that amendment is still urgent, and I repeat that call today."

The President has to know, however, that his proposed amendment is not going anywhere—not this year, not ever. Before an amendment can be sent to the states for ratification, it must pass two thirds of both houses of Congress. The House of Representatives, whose members are elected every two years, will approve any popular proposed amendment. One third of the Senate, by contrast, need not face the electors for six years and, thus, can defeat any proposed amendment with a minimal risk of political retribution. The Senate, over recent years, has been the graveyard for proposed amendments favored by conservatives—term limits, school prayer, flag burning, busing, and a balanced budget. "Gay marriage" is just one more to add to the pile. So is President Bush just kidding around with his supporters? Is this, in the late Senator Moynihan's phrase, "Boob bait for the Bubbas?"

President Bush has an excellent option: The Constitution provides that a simple statute can take an issue off the Supreme Court's docket and let the states decide it. A simple statute passed by a simple majority in Congress and signed by the President can assure that each state can decide for itself without fear of being overridden by a judicially imposed uniform national rule—and that no state can decide for any other. Congress can just reenact the Defense of Marriage Act restricting marriage to one man and one woman and add one sentence: "This law is not subject to review by any lower Federal Court or the U.S. Supreme Court." Congress, under Article III of our Constitution, controls the jurisdiction of the federal courts. It can even abolish the lower federal courts if it chooses to. It can also limit the Supreme Court to "cases affecting Ambassadors, other public Ministers and Consuls, and those in which a State shall be a party." If Congress acts, the "gay marriage" and "civil union" issues will be decided by the states. Chris and Dennis will be "married" in Massachusetts and in any other state that wants to recognize their "marriage." That seems fair enough.

Maybe Congress would not pass the

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law—but President Bush could ask. That does not seem too much effort to defend a sacred institution. His supporters need to know that he is serious.

—*William J. Quirk*

RONALD REAGAN, R.I.P. By no means the least of Ronald Reagan's achievements as man and president was that he may well have been the first chief executive since Herbert Hoover who did not deserve a prison term for his crimes. He also managed to hold the presidency twice, hand his office over to a designated successor, and remain a popular and even a beloved figure for the rest of his life. Aside from these not inestimable accomplishments, however, his enduring legacy as a conservative statesman is pretty thin.

Unlike Franklin D. Roosevelt, Reagan did not deceive and manipulate his country into war through outright and covert aggression against foreign nations. Unlike Harry S. Truman, Reagan did not cover up for known Soviet agents such as Alger Hiss and then vilify patriots who tried to expose them and bring them to justice. Unlike Dwight D. Eisenhower, he did not engineer the deliberate starvation of thousands of German civilians after World War II nor contrive to send thousands of Soviet POW's back to be massacred by Stalin in "Operation Keelhaul." Unlike John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon, Reagan did not steal the presidential election outright, use the government to spy on and harass his political rivals, or cover up criminal conduct within his own administration.

It may be that Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter did not commit such crimes either, but in the case of these two mediocrities, their innocence may have been simply because of lack of imagination rather than character. Reagan was by far the most principled man to serve as president in half a century.

And yet, given the expectations of the Reagan presidency that virtually all American conservatives had, he was a disappointment. It is simply a myth that he won the Cold War or destroyed the Soviet Union, and every serious anticommunist at the time knew that.

In 1987, Rep. Jim Courter, a strong anticommunist congressman of the era, wrote in the Heritage Foundation's *Policy Review* that "pronouncements by the administration about 'having the Soviets on the run' are totally unwarranted," and, when Reagan left office in 1989, George Will remarked, "Reagan has accelerated the moral disarmament of the West . . . by elevating wishful thinking to the status of political philosophy." The Soviets collapsed shortly afterward mainly because of their own internal economic and political incoherence, not because Reagan defeated them.

Reagan's most successful policies were economic, which is why the economic determinists who today dominate conservatism gush over him so much, and he did meet the challenges of an eroding economic base misguided by economic illiteracies and political demagoguery. But the federal leviathan, by the time he left office, was even larger and more powerful than when he entered, with bigger budgets, one more federal department, and unfulfilled promises of abolishing two existing departments.

What the American right of that era wanted from Ronald Reagan more than anything else was a counterrevolution against the cultural domination of liberalism. In that respect, Reagan was a miserable failure. Throughout his administration, the poison of "political correctness" and its grim sister of multiculturalism took over the nation's universities and media, aided by the mass immigration that began to take off in the Reagan years and to which he and his administration were largely oblivious. (In 1986, administration-backed legislation delivered an amnesty for illegal aliens.)

He did little to stop or push back affirmative action; the Voting Rights Act was extended (with the help of Newt Gingrich), and the Martin Luther King, Jr., federal holiday became law. The Reagan years were critical to the racial and cultural revolution that has now enthroned itself.

Neoconservatives like to claim Ronald Reagan as one of their own and to wrap themselves in his mantle, but he was never what we today call a "neocon." Unlike them, he was a Goldwater conservative who first came to public political attention by his rousing endorsement of Goldwater on the very eve of his 1964 defeat. From that moment until 1980, the American right defined itself around a Reagan candidacy and the promise of what he would do when he took office. Reagan was a "neoconservative" only in the sense that he was a liberal who became a conservative. The conservatism he embraced was not simply a watered-down version of liberalism purporting to be something else.

Therefore, you can't really blame Reagan's inadequacies as a conservative on neoconservatism, nor can you blame him as a man. You probably have to blame the ideology itself—which insisted that it really was "morning in America" when, in fact, it was far closer to the 11th hour. Only a right willing and able to tell the time correctly and explain it to Americans will be able to perceive and confront the challenges Ronald Reagan missed. The right he represented and led couldn't do that.

—*Samuel Francis*

OBITER DICTA: The preceding article, by Samuel Francis, comes to us courtesy of Creators' Syndicate.

Mark your calendars now for The Rockford Institute's next two International Convivia. In January 2005, the Institute will host "How Republics Perish" in **Rome**, where we will read Cicero and Machiavelli and be joined by **Dr. James Patrick**, who will lead walking tours of the Eternal City. We are making plans for both inexpensive convent lodging and hotel lodging. In late May/early June 2005, we will host "Walter Scott *Versus* the Scottish Enlightenment" in **Edinburgh, Scotland**. Emory University professor of philosophy and David Hume scholar **Dr. Donald Livingston** will join us for a few days in the Highlands after enjoying the city that Robert Louis Stevenson described as "what Paris was meant to be." For more information, call **Christopher Check** at (815) 964-5811.

Our first poet this month is **David Middleton**. Dr. Middleton, the poet-in-residence at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, is poetry editor for the *Classical Outlook* (University of Georgia) and the *Anglican Theological Review*. His books of verse include *The Burning Fields* (1991) and *Beyond the Chandeleurs* (1999), both from LSU Press.

Our second poet is **Catherine Munch**, who writes from Bangor, Maine. Her work has previously appeared in *The Progressive*.

Our art is provided by our art director, **H. Ward Sterett** of Roscoe, Illinois. Mr. Sterett received his B.F.A. from the University of Colorado and his M.F.A. from Northern Illinois University, and he attended the L'Abri Fellowship, where he studied the effect of Christianity on art. He currently works as a sculptor, painter, and printmaker in Roscoe, of which he is village president.

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by Thomas Fleming

Hatemongers

What do you call a man who loves his country but is not so enthusiastic about the government that confiscates half of his income? Who takes care of his own family but is not sure why, through tax policies and affirmative action, he is also supposed to take care of the children of other people he does not know? Who believes in charity but believes it begins at home and does not really extend beyond the borders of the United States? Who wishes peace and prosperity to the peoples of the Third World but does not necessarily want to bring them here? Who admires the brave struggle of the Israeli people but does not see why American money and military clout have to be used to do to Palestinians what was done to Jews in the past? Who wishes no ill to anyone else's religion but wonders why non-Christians can use a government funded by mostly Christian taxes to teach anti-Christianity in schools and eliminate Christian symbols and prayers from public places?

I would call such a man, no matter what party he belongs to or principles he espouses, an instinctive conservative. Leftists, however, particularly the leftist tentacles of the institutional octopus of hate that is strangling both civilization and freedom, would call him a bigot and an antisemite. I am obviously referring to the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League, the American Civil Liberties Union, People for the American Way, and all other attack-dog organizations, leftist newspapers, anti-Christian magazines, anti-European newsletters, and antiheterosexual websites that prowl the world seeking the destruction of souls.

It is an easy trick of propaganda to portray all natural affections in the dark colors of prejudice. Why would anyone like the South if it were not for slavery and Jim Crow? Who but an antisemite objects to the slaughter of the (semitic) Palestinians? Only a communist or a Jew would oppose the *Führer*.

To change the value of words is a more ambitious project. There was a time when *prejudice* did not mean hatred of other races; when *patriarchy* referred to a specific set of social institutions found, for example, in the early books of the Old Testament; when *Southern* was not a term of abuse; and when *fundamentalist* and *integralist* were not applied to fanatical Muslims who practice terrorism. Even such words as *fascist* and *right-wing, liberal* and *leftist*, once upon a time had agreed-upon meanings. Now they are merely terms of abuse or praise. In Italy, Umberto Bossi, whose Lega Nord favors free enterprise and a decentralized political structure, is routinely denounced as a "fascist," despite the fact that his positions are the opposite of the Fascist Party's program and that modern fascists and ex-fascists hate his guts.

The first impulse on hearing of such travesties is to say, "How Orwellian" and then move on. The phenomenon is far older than Orwell, however, and the corruption lies deeper. Conservatives are fond of quoting Thucydides' (3.82.4) observations on the political distortion of language. In a conventional translation, Thucydides does sound a great deal like the author of *1984*, railing against the manipulation of language practiced by the rulers of a revolutionary regime:

> Words had to change their ordinary meaning and to take that which was now given them. Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal ally; prudent hesitation, specious cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question inaptness to act on any. Frantic violence, became the attribute of manliness; cautious plotting, a justifiable means of self-defense.

Thucydides is not an easy writer to understand, and his opening sentence is particularly difficult. Literally translated, it means something like this: "They changed the customary valuation of words in relation to reality by means of a process of justification." In other words, as Jonathan Price has argued in a recent book, words did not simply change their meaning: Political leaders manipulated the value of words so that good words now had bad connotations and *vice versa*.

Then there is the question of revolution. The Greek word is *stasis*, which means something like a civil war between two political factions. *Staseis* were not always clashes of opposing principles. The conflict might be between rival clans or between contestants for power (or, as in Mytilene during the days of Sappho and Alcaeus, both). Naturally, each party would use every verbal trick in portraying itself as the defender of the better cause, but Thucydides, in describing the *stasis* on the island of Corcyra, goes further, arguing that, during the period of the Peloponnesian War, the Greek cities were morally corrupted. The relevant modern parallel for Thucydides' analysis is not so much the propaganda issued by revolutionary regimes (whether international socialist or national socialist) but the demonization practiced by the leaders of factions, movements, and parties against their rivals.

Leftists, naturally, would seize upon this to issue their usual denunciations of McCarthyism. To some extent, they would be justified. Anti-Marxists have gone overboard, from time to time, in equating all forms of leftism and liberalism with communism. This was a serious mistake, since Marxism was only one of the more perverse expressions of the liberal mentality, though, in fact, feminism, homosexualism, and vegetarianism are even more perverse. The enemy was never really Marxism *per se* but liberalism in all its forms: not just the liberalism of Rousseau but the liberalism of Voltaire; not just the socialism of Marx but the destructive antisocialism of John Stuart Mill.

Conservatives might be pardoned for their excesses in the 1950's. Without understanding how or why, they had been on the losing end of every political, social, religious, and cultural revolution since the 15th century. By the time Senator McCarthy entered politics, men and women with conservative instincts could only use liberal arguments to defend their positions. These were the people who loved their country but did not entirely trust the massive leftist government erected by the New Dealers, and yet, when challenged to state their beliefs, they

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could only fall back on the slogans of radical individualism that had been the propaganda terms used in an earlier phase of the revolution. Small wonder that the conservative movement, as it was mistakenly called, was preyed upon by such liberal kooks as Ayn Rand.

To speak of a "conservative mind" in America is somewhat misleading. The average American does have a conservative heart, but his mind has been so addled by bad teachers, bad books, and bad ideas that he often feels guilty if he prefers to limit his charity to his neighbors, if he resents the money squandered on public schools, if he does not share in the general glee over the massive immigration that is transforming the country of his fathers into something he cannot recognize. He is easily intimidated when the left condemns this vague, inchoate mixture of family loyalty and patriotism as the bigotry of the "extreme right." In fact, the ultraleft Southern Poverty Law Center is always railing against "right-wing extremism," by which they mean everyone to the right of the *New Republic*—up to and including Matthew Hale.

Reduced to the clichés of politics, conservatives are guilty of hating and oppressing non-European racial and ethnic groups, persecuting non-Christians (especially Jews), exploiting and impoverishing the working classes, destroying the environment, and waging destructive wars. Leftists, by contrast, promote racial and religious tolerance, work selflessly for the welfare of the working classes, preserve the environment, and, to cap it all, they always "give peace a chance." Leftists know this to be true, despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

In the 20th century, the preeminent leftist governments were the Marxist regimes in the Soviet Union and its satellites in China and Cuba, Vietnam and Cambodia. We did not really need the *Black Book of Communism* to tell us that all these regimes are evil. The regimes in China and the Soviet Union killed over 100 million people, started and waged wars of aggression, stole property from peasants who were reduced to slavery, ruthlessly exploited the workers, and destroyed the environment. As for ethnic and religious tolerance, let the Jews murdered by Stalin or the Tibetans crushed even to this day by China cry out for vengeance.

What about Hitler? whine the leftists, their feelings wounded. In the first place, he is a piker compared with Mao and Stalin. Second, he was a revolutionary socialist whose only conservative appeal was that he was saving the Germans from the communists. His regime was neither traditional nor Christian, and his propagandists never tired of proclaiming how revolutionary and progressive they were. Though Mussolini had been a leader of the Socialist Party and remained anti-Catholic until the end, Fascist Italy was far more conservative than Nazi Germany. And Fascist Italy, though I find it vulgar and unappealing, was heaven on earth compared with any international socialist or national socialist regime, precisely because the zaniness of Fascist ideology was tempered by the conservative Italian character and by the participation of many non-Fascist conservatives in the government.

Leftists like to apply the "fascist" label to conservatives, and, in the process, they equate *fascist* with *Nazi*, a lie they can get away with because the leftists who control our schools make sure that Americans grow up stupid, ignorant, and helpless. On the other hand, leftists scream bloody murder if their own principles are described as Marxist, socialist, or communist—which they are.

Some years ago, I took part in a symposium devoted to a deceased Southern conservative. Near the end of the final session, two former communists waxed eloquent on their late friend's failure to speak out against segregation—the worst moral evil of the 20th century. This was too much even for my easygoing disposition. I began quietly, explaining the difficult position which morally responsible Southerners were in, and pointed out that even Faulkner, though he opposed segregation, said he would side with his state against outside meddlers. Finally, I concluded, I had to wonder about the moral sense of people who had spent their adult lives as apologists for Stalin and Mao, dictators who had murdered many tens of millions of innocent people, but were now indulging in moral outrage against separate drinking fountains. They were as hypocritical as the *New York Times* writers who condemned Richard Nixon's low crimes and misdemeanors without ever apologizing for having condoned Stalin's mass murder.

There, in a nutshell, is the difference between them and us. Our fathers and grandfathers told race jokes and belonged to restricted clubs; their fathers and grandfathers shilled for Stalin or the equally bloodthirsty Trotsky. No, we are not perfect, and, yes, conservative societies have, on occasion, betrayed their deepest principles and committed terrible crimes. They, however, since the days of Robespierre, have committed mass theft and mass murder *on principle*. And, when they lack the power to kill and rob, they make do with corrupting the young with pornography; destroying marriage with feminism and homosexualism; undermining our morals with Freudianism and behaviorism; warping our sense of beauty with free verse, abstract expressionist painting, and Bauhaus architecture; and, if we dare to complain, they cry, "antisemite," as if Jackson Pollock or the Bauhaus architects were Jewish.

Yes, in addition to their other fine qualities, leftists are chronic liars about every subject they discuss, from Athenian democracy to the dangers of secondhand smoke. Even the term they often use to describe themselves, *liberal*, is a lie. American liberals are nonrevolutionary socialists, and their allies to the left are unreconstructed Marxists. We ought to forgive them, I suppose, because they have no choice. When your entire worldview is based on counterfactual assumptions about human nature—the equality of the sexes, the immorality of private property and status, the artificiality of the family, etc.—you cannot help lying about everything, whether the subject under discussion is women in the military, the dangers of asbestos, the "epidemic" of father-daughter incest, or the effectiveness of public education.

Why should any conservative care if he is attacked by the leftists of the SPLC and ADL or those of the *New York Times*? These people have lies in their mouths, blood on their hands for the great genocides of the 20th century, and guilt on their consciences for the seduction of the innocent and the destruction of our civilization. Our task, as our late friend Mel Bradford put it, is to remember who we are and stop our ears against the siren songs of the revolutionists, which have proved to be not the anthems of a new dawn but a message of hate and filth that leads to destruction. c

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Cholesterol

by David Middleton

—For Robert Herrick (1591-1674), Anglican priest and poet, and author of the poems "His fare-well to Sack" and "The Welcome to Sack"

i. Farewell

My annual checkup and its blood work done
And three months' fast to drive bad numbers down
I swing by Popeye's for a tub of thighs,
Mashed potatoes and gravy, greasy fries,
Proud of myself as I am every year
Crash dieting to avoid yearlong regimes
I'd have to accept to get those pills renewed
I need to keep my heart pump quiet and strong.
But this time, three days later, comes the call,
My G.P. preaching on the "good" and "bad"
Cholesterol—a morality play
Of chemicals with Blood Sludge as the Vice.
So now I run on the treadmill, do dead lifts,
And live on tofu, lettuce, and O'Doul's
Slimming until suspenders must be bought
To keep up pants around new buns of steel
And washboard abs young girls stare at again.
But, Lord, I'm fifty. What's this good health for?
To wander through a nursing home at ninety,
Then curl up like a fetus on the floor?

ii. Welcome

So what's the point? I've got a year of pills
Renewed and I can plead heredity—
My father who ran marathons near sixty
With numbers past 300 like my own
(Why was my draft number only half that high?)
Or his own mother who approached the same
Yet died of sheer old age at ninety-five.
And what are my doctor's numbers, pray tell,
My dietician's in the checkout line
Stocking up on vodka, cheddar, Boston butt?
So taking one last look at the weird thrill
Of a fifty-year-old body teenage lean
With half a head of hair, a mind half daft,
And wrinkles where old bullied muscles bulge,
I bid farewell to grim irenic dreams,
Then go eat in New Orleans at K Paul's,
Down buttered bread, shrimp gumbo, Chardonnay,
Watch abs of iron relax toward abs of flab,
Just grateful I've had fifty years, and sod
This liver and the metabolic gods.

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by Paul Gottfried

Whose Globe, Whose Europe?

A widely publicized essay, "The Collapse of Globalism and the Rebirth of Nationalism," by John Ralston Saul, appeared in the March issue of *Harper's*. It is an extended attack on the Enlightenment and its global effects, launched from the multicultural left, which dwells on the happy turn of events that has allowed "positive forms of nationalism to surge forth" against Western economic imperialism. In both South Africa and Brazil, "ethical" nationalists are rising up against pharmaceutical transnationals and other global corporate interests, forcing them to disgorge overpriced products and profits. At the same time, nationalism of "the worst sort" has manifested itself on the European populist right. Thus, "Italy is governed by three nationalists, one of them the leader of Mussolini's old party." Not only in Jörg Haider's Austria, Saul warns us, but in Belgium, Denmark, France, Holland, Norway, and Switzerland, a resurgent xenophobic nationalism is now raging. This new mood threatens global capitalism from the virulent right, which has generated "fear of Muslims" and "a return of anti-Semitism."

Such statements are rife with ideologically driven lies. Today's European antisemitism is almost entirely the product of Muslim immigration, which, ironically, European Jewish organizations have promoted. No one in Italy's present coalition government headed by Silvio Berlusconi runs "Mussolini's old party." The figure to whom Saul is referring is Gianfranco Fini, whose party, the Alleanze Nazionale, has always described itself as "post-fascist." These days, when Fini is not effusively apologizing for the holocaust and visiting Yad Vashem in Israel, he is trying to persuade Italians to be even more accepting of North African and Albanian Muslim immigrants. Another of Saul's three Italian nationalists, Umberto Bossi, is, in fact, an antinationalist devoted to breaking up the Italian Republic into semi-autonomous regions.

Why are Europeans who will not go along with E.U. control or with an already explosive immigration policy the representatives of "an old-style negative nationalism," which just happens to be coextensive with Western Christian societies? Why is Saul denying identitarian rights to white European-Americans that he happily bestows on Bantus? Western people, some might be naive enough to think, deserve the same right to determine membership in their societies as do African tribes. These unfashionable questions came to mind as I read about the fate of three supporters of the Vlaams Blok (VB), the Flemish independence movement, who, on April 21, were heavily fined by the Court of Appeal in Ghent for "violating the law of anti-racism." The law has existed in Belgium since 1981, before being extended to E.U.-member countries. The VB supporters will appeal the ruling to the Cour de Cassation (the Belgian Supreme Court), but what happened to them is outrageous, no matter the outcome. Their crime was that they have appealed to Flemish voters—quite successfully, judging by their pluralities in Ghent and Antwerp—against further Muslim immigration into their region and against all efforts by the E.U. and the politically correct Belgian central government to micromanage their society. How this amounts to "racism, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism," as Belgian Minister of Social Integration, Equality of Opportunity, and Interculturalism Marie Arena asserted after the Court of Appeals handed down its April decision, remains to be explained. All that the court and the two civil parties, the Center for Equality of Opportunity and the Struggle Against Racism and the Flemish League for the Rights of Man, could find to make their case were remarks by the plaintiffs and scattered phrases published in Blok pamphlets that noted the (self-evident) correlation between rising urban crime and Muslims recently arrived from the Third World. This judgment was handed down as the Blok was preparing for Belgium's regional and E.U. elections, scheduled for June 13, in which it was expected to do swimmingly, particularly in Ghent, the site of the trial. The ruling has made it hard, observes VB president Frank Vanhecke, to carry on an electoral campaign, given the energy and attention required to pursue the appeal at the federal level. An adverse ruling by the Cour de Cassation may open the door to what the multicultural federal and E.U. ruling establishment in Brussels really wants to do: get rid of identitarian populist movements that oppose European multicultural reconstruction.

In Belgium, that might not be difficult. If the highest appellate court, an instrument of the governing coalition from which the Blok has been excluded, rules with the lower court, then two roads will be open to the multicultural theocrats, before the Muslims supplant them. One is to harass anti-immigrationist and democratic localist parties with suits on the basis of existing antidiscrimination laws, thereby driving them from the hustings into the courts. At the same time, mounting fines will consume the funds of the populist right needed to run visible electoral campaigns. The second, more dramatic course is to get the commission that oversees the financing of parliamentary parties to recommend to the Conseil d'Etat a simple plan. Because of its supposed incitement to racism, the VB will be ordered to forfeit its assets and funding. Once a majority of the executive council agrees to this stand, which will certainly receive the support of the international press and of Muslims on all continents, the VB will look like dead meat. Appearances, however, can be deceiving. What such an expropriation and implicit ban will do is escalate a struggle that is far more critical for the West than all the bringing of "democracy" to unwilling Semites. In the serious war, one finds authentic democrats rooted in communities and in a civilization pitted against "global democrats"—at *Harper's* as well as in the Belgian court system. In Europe, this struggle has become irrepressible and, from a pro-Western perspective, long overdue. That the average age of VB leadership is now in the low 30's bodes extremely well for the future of the West.

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CAIR and the ADL: Partnership for Hate

What Becomes of the Race Opportunists?

by Srdja Trifkovic

At the tail end of the Russian Revolution, Lenin mocked some Mensheviks for protesting that they were not permitted to express their views in public: "Permit us to put you before a firing squad for saying that. Either you refrain from expressing your views, or, if you insist on expressing your political views publicly . . . then you will have only yourselves to blame if we treat you as the worst and most pernicious elements."

Vladimir Ilich's candor is rare today, but the sentiment is not. The nearest contemporary equivalent of the culture of hate embodied in Bolshevism is global *jihad*. Its chief front organization in the United States, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), claims to be "just another civil-rights group," devoted to protecting the rights of Muslims and promoting a better understanding of Islam in America.

The specifics of how it goes about this ostensibly worthy goal are revealing. CAIR has called the guilty verdict in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing case "a travesty of justice" and argued that it "represents the degree to which an anti-Muslim venom has penetrated into society." It condemned the conviction of Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind sheikh, for conspiring to blow up New York City landmarks in 1995, as a "hate crime." (CAIR advisory-board member Siraj Wahhaj was named by U.S. Attorney Mary Jo White in 1995 as one of the unindicted coconspirators in the attempt to blow up New York City sites in 1993.)

In August 1998, CAIR condemned the targeting of terrorist training camps in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the bombings of two U.S. embassies in Africa. In October of that year, it demanded the removal of a Los Angeles billboard describing Osama bin Laden as "the sworn enemy." In 1999, it objected to the premiere of *Touched by an Angel*, which featured a story line about slavery in Sudan and forced conversions of Christians in the south of the country. Its 1999 annual report criticized American public schools for "the lack of religious accommodation" and praised Paterson, New Jersey (the scene of much public rejoicing by immigrant residents on September 11), where the school district cancels classes on two Muslim holidays.

Even Muslims have found themselves under attack when they expressed criticism of Muslim belligerence. In April 2001, CAIR issued a press release criticizing Khalid Duran's then-forthcoming book (though it had not yet seen it), *Children of Abraham: An Introduction to Islam for Jews*. Its attack grew into an international campaign, with some Arab religious leaders calling the author an apostate (*murtadd*)—an invitation to a compulsory death sentence under Islam. Duran, a Pakistani-born academic, complained that the seal of approval applied to CAIR by American politicians of both parties gave it an altogether undeserved credibility and emboldened it to become aggressive and oppressive. Non-Muslims do not know who speaks for whom in the Muslim community, he says, and "CAIR and its fellow extremist organizations have had surprising success in being accepted at the highest levels of the U.S. government."

In the immediate aftermath of September 11, CAIR's leading duet—Palestinian-born Nihad Awad and an American-born convert, Ibrahim ("Dougie") Hooper—were invited twice to the White House to meet President Bush, as part of his campaign to assure the public that the majority of Arabs and Muslims in the country do not support terrorism. At the time Mr. Bush received them, CAIR had not yet condemned the attacks. Until December of that year, it referred to the "alleged attackers," implying that someone other than the named 19 were the real culprits.

Some days after the attacks, CAIR, on its website, also called on its supporters to send donations: Under a picture of the World Trade Center in flames, the message said simply, "Donate to the NY/DC Emergency Relief Fund." Yet the hyperlink took would-be donors to the website of the Holy Land Foundation, an Islamic "charity" whose assets were frozen soon thereafter by the U.S. government because it had given millions of dollars to Hamas! A week later, CAIR called on people to donate to the Global Relief Foundation, another Islamic charity based in suburban Chicago, whose assets were also frozen in December 2001. According to the Treasury Department, "The Global Relief Foundation has connections to, has provided support for, and has provided assistance to Osama Bin Laden, the Al Qaeda Network, and other known terrorist groups."

To direct donations for the victims of September 11 to an Islamic charity accused of helping terrorists is scandalous in itself. To do so twice within one week should have brought CAIR to the attention of law-enforcement agencies.

In the best Stalinist tradition, however, CAIR has tried to airbrush its record since September 11. It used to keep archives of all its past public statements and activists' speeches on the web; after September 11, many have mysteriously disappeared. Since then, materials that have subsequently proved embarrassing to CAIR have also been removed.

In 2002, CAIR embarked on a library campaign to help Americans learn about Islam "as a religion of peace and justice," to counter what it saw as "a rising tide of anti-Muslim rhetoric." Its goal was to place a package of books, videos, and audio cassettes in as many of the country's 16,000 libraries as possible. As Nihad Awad put it, "the lack of timely and accurate books in libraries . . . [creates a] knowledge gap that leads to increased misunderstanding and produces unnecessary divisions." CAIR claimed that the program was not subsidized by any foreign government, though it received a half-million-dollar donation for the program from Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin

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Chronicles' foreign-affairs editor Srdja Trifkovic is the author of The Sword of the Prophet: Islam—History, Theology, Impact on the World.

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Talal bin Abdul Aziz al Saud. This effectively gave the endeavor a Wahabi seal of approval on the materials included in the library package, in addition to the imprimatur that CAIR already enjoys from the closely related Egyptian Ikhwanis.

By 2003, CAIR felt emboldened to complain about the FBI surveillance of mosques but remained mute when it was revealed soon thereafter that the Al-Farooq mosque in New York was complicit in collecting funds for Al Qaeda. Undeterred, it has continued to demand amendments to the USA PATRIOT Act to protect the Muslims from government eavesdropping. It did not comment on last year's spate of bombings from Casablanca to Istanbul, though, and it never misses an opportunity to attack the slightest sign of "disrespect" for Islam in America.

CAIR's longer-term agenda became apparent in May 2004, when it issued a report claiming that anti-Muslim incidents in the United States had increased by almost 70 percent in 2003. The study "outlined" (a euphemism for superficial or fraudulent research) over a thousand "incidents and experiences of anti-Muslim violence, discrimination and harassment" last year, "the highest number of Muslim civil rights cases ever recorded." (The word *experience* is another coded term: It denotes an entirely subjective view of a situation or event that could not be pumped up into an "incident.") According to CAIR's reckoning, hate crimes alone jumped by an unprecedented 121 percent. On the basis of this report, CAIR demanded a public inquiry to post-September 11 policies impacting the Muslim community, legislative actions to curb the use of profiling by law-enforcement agencies, increased hate-crime prosecutions, and "modifications" to the PATRIOT Act to end "abuses" of the Muslim community.

With the latest "report" and its associated demands, the real agenda of CAIR is finally clear. It is a hate group that is not interested in promoting anyone's "rights," let alone increasing any "understanding" of anything. It does not want to change the nature of discourse on Islam in America; it wants to transform America into a barren wasteland of mind-numbing uniformity of thought and feeling on par with Kim Jong Il's. Awad and Hooper are not Islamic community activists seeking to better the lot of their coreligionists; they are political visionaries.

If CAIR sees itself as the acceptable face of Islam presented to the public and the media, what must "extremist" Islam be like? CAIR probably does not represent the majority of Muslims in America, who are said to be mostly moderates who wish a quiet life. That, however, is irrelevant—not because such moderates are rare, but because they are unimportant. Religions, like political ideologies, are pushed along by money, power, and tiny vocal minorities.

Among America's Muslims, the most active minority, epitomized in CAIR's leaders, is pushing the wrong way. Among America's Jews—a community similar in numbers, albeit far better integrated and more influential—another small minority is identified with an almost equally unpleasant organization: the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) of B'nai B'rith.

Like CAIR, the ADL resorts to deception in billing itself as "the world's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism through programs and services that counteract hatred, prejudice and bigotry." What it does in practice has very little to do with this eminently worthy objective. It has a radical political program and social-engineering agenda that goes well beyond "fighting discrimination." It insists on America's total demographic and cultural transformation, even though that transformation is manifestly detrimental to the interests of the Jewish community itself.

The ADL's immigration policy illustrates the point. For decades, in line with its loathing of the "principally white, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon view of America," ADL has been advocating more or less unrestricted Third World immigration into the United States, on the grounds that a restrictive policy was inherently discriminatory and that a more diverse population would make the Jews more secure. In November 1965, it hailed the abolition of the national-origins quota system and stressed the "educational role" it played in helping to bring this change about; for the ensuing four decades, it stridently equated any advocacy of immigration control with "discrimination."

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As many American Jews now realize, however, the ADL's agenda was driven by its leftist ideological blinkers, not by its concern for the community. As Stephen Steinlight, former director of national affairs at the American Jewish Committee, wrote soon after September 11, the Jewish community "should stop letting the thought police of the more extreme incarnations of multiculturalism squelch it":

> We cannot consider the inevitable consequences of current trends—not least among them *diminished Jewish political power*—with detachment. Our present privilege, success, and power do not inure us from the effect of historical processes, and history has not come to an end, even in America. But if we hope to persuade the organized Jewish community to adopt a new stance of enlightened self-interest with regard to the immigration debate, a debate that will surely become increasingly bitter, fractious, and politicized in the crudest partisan ways in the days ahead we have little choice. Of equal urgency, and inextricably linked to that debate, is the mission of finding ways to strengthen national unity and social cohesion in America by resuscitating patriotic assimilation under demanding, historically unprecedented circumstances.

That Jewish groups—Steinlight went on, obviously alluding to the ADL—should defend an uncritical immigration and visa policy that allows for the open-ended entry of Muslim fundamentalists into America and then deny government agencies the means of keeping track of them is self-defeating to the point of being suicidal. Major components of the current open-ended approach to immigration must be rethought

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"before we will have become complicit, through action or inaction, in a *fait accompli* that may have dire implications for Jews and for America."

What he means is that, these days, real antisemitism does not come from those who talk about the Jewish role in promoting liberal immigration policies. It comes from Arabs and other Third World immigrants—including, significantly, a growing segment of Aztlan nationalists—whom those very policies have welcomed and who may yet make the position of the Jewish community in America infinitely less secure than it would have been if they had not come in the first place. That much should be obvious; what Steinlight understands, however, Abraham Foxman will never admit.

The ADL is no less self-defeating in its routine equation of criticism of Israel with antisemitism and its equation of Israel with Likud's policies. By engaging in such smear campaigns, it breeds the very malaise it claims to combat. By insisting on an ever-more-passionate American attachment to Israel, the ADL is not doing the latter a favor. Encouraging Israel to diversify and enhance her external relations and to reduce her present excessive dependence on the United States, would make her better equipped to survive in an inherently unfriendly environment. The making of foreign policy is a form of continuous adaptive behavior aimed at preserving and enhancing the security of a state. Being perceived as a permanent American client-state—and perceiving herself as such, and modifying her behavior accordingly—was bad for Israel because it distorted the adaptive pattern. This overreliance limits Israel's room for diplomatic and military maneuvering, and this may become fully apparent at a future critical juncture when American and Israeli strategies diverge.

The ADL's self-appointed task of preventing such divergence in perpetuity is inherently risky. Its strategy of doing so heavy-handedly, by equating any opposition to the task with antisemitism, is dishonest and dangerous. If American regional hegemony is challenged by a new element in the equation—say, by Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons (and Iran is far more likely to acquire those weapons than Iraq ever was) the limits of the present symbiosis may become rapidly and—for the Israelis—painfully obvious.

Perhaps the darkest side of the ADL is its contribution to the campaign to create legislation against "hate crimes" motivated "by reason of the race, color, religion or national origin of another person." In April 1990, Congress passed, and President George H.W. Bush signed, the bill. This awful law has led to the rise of a veritable industry of special-rights advocates, attorneys, and assorted hatemongers who continually prompt their constituents to report "crimes." They have made America seriously less pleasant than she had been before. The "culture" of victimology and the obsessive imposition of the race, sex, and sexual-orientation agenda on the rest of us was the predictable result. If the ADL *and* CAIR had their way, we would have more of the same—much more. Their demands for additional sweeping legislation to limit freedom of speech in America are crafted in different phrases but are identical in substance.

Prima facie, CAIR and the ADL look like two sides of the same coin, like communists and Nazis, or one-world liberals and neocons. They both share a vision of America as an unpleasant—nay, outright evil—place. They hate the real, historical America with a passion and want to transform her in line with their peculiar world outlooks. Their desired outcomes and the methods they would apply are somewhat different, but the goal is the same: CAIR's and the ADL's partnership for hate is a revolutionary project that aims to destroy the vestiges of America's Christian faith and tradition, to make Americans feel guilty about who they are and ashamed of their history, culture, and ancestors.

Nevertheless, one important distinction should be kept in mind: CAIR's motivations and methodology are far more in keeping with the broader religious community it claims to represent—in terms of Islam's advance against what is left of Christian civilization and society—than the ADL's are or ever will be. As I have demonstrated in some detail in *The Sword of the Prophet*, Christianity and Christendom have no inherent value—except, perhaps, a negative one—in Muslim eyes, and activities to hasten our ongoing dissolution are fully justifiable to most "mainstream" Muslim leaders, both strategically and morally.

With respect to the ADL, by contrast, the circumstances are more complex. Many American Jews are waking up to the impact on Jews, specifically, as well as on everybody else, of the ADL's pet projects—most notably, unrestricted immigration. For some of them, Foxman's ridiculous campaign against Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* was a wake-up call. That ranting appears like a silly footnote compared to the ADL's role in opening the floodgates of Third World immigration and laying the foundations of a police state, but Foxman could not help himself: His hatred of the film's central character outweighed whatever positive feelings he may have for anyone and anything, the Jews included.

This time, dozens of Jewish-American commentators of very different political persuasions rejected his tirades, however, and pointed out that he has no claim to represent anyone but his organization's members. Some, such as Don Feder, warned that the same forces that would pull down the Cross also seek to smash the Star of David and trample the Torah under their bloody boots:

> If Christians and Jews do not unite in the face of this international jihad—and make common cause with Hindus and Buddhists as well—we are all lost. With the raw sewage being pumped out of the open cesspool that calls itself a creative community—songs that celebrate rape and the degradation of women, films that glorify violence and legitimize perversion and sexual anarchy—it's ironic that some have chosen to attack a film that dramatizes sacrifice and redemption.

The only service Foxman and his organization may have done to America at this critical moment in her history was to prompt a bold response from those Jewish intellectuals who realize the need to resuscitate patriotic assimilation in order to promote national unity and social cohesion or who understand that the preservation of Christianity is essential not only for the moral survival of the Jews as a community but, in time, for their physical survival. While it is too much to expect that this realization will dawn on the current leadership of the ADL, we can hope that the disparity between the organization's self-anointed mission and the genuine interests of the community it claims to champion will become increasingly evident—to the detriment of the former.

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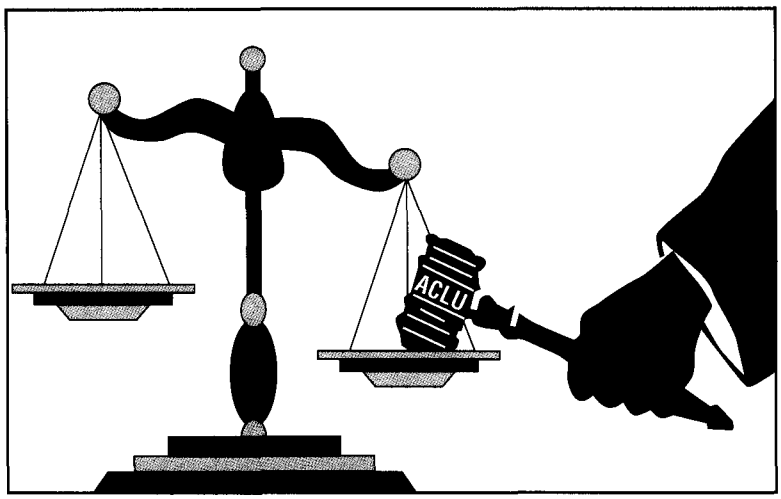
What Kind of Freedom?

Picking and Choosing Liberties to Defend

by Doug Bandow



H. Ward Sterett

When family and culture are under constant attack, there sometimes seems to be no greater enemy than the American Civil Liberties Union. Yet, when Washington is busy expanding the welfare/warfare state, sometimes only the ACLU seems willing to confront Leviathan. What is someone who loves both liberty and community to do?

There is no reason why the protection of fundamental freedoms must undercut family and community. At base, what the ACLU really does not like is freedom exercised on behalf of religious, traditional, or family values.

While opposing intrusive government searches, for instance, the organization fights measures to empower families to choose a better education for their own children. While emphasizing the sanctity of human life by opposing capital punishment, the ACLU combats any attempt to limit abortion, even the near-infanticide of partial-birth abortion.

The fact that much of what the ACLU does is unpopular is actually one of its strengths. Perhaps the group's greatest failing is not recognizing that emotionally charged social conflicts are best resolved without recourse to government edicts and court rulings. Instead of shrinking the size and reach of the Leviathan state, which would reduce the bitter battles that now dominate American courtrooms, the ACLU wants to use government power for social engineering. The organization seems to think that there is nothing worse than a traditional social institution—say, a family under a father's headship—flourishing while minding its own business.

Thus, on virtually every educational issue, the ACLU comes down on the side of the imperialist, encroaching state, employing a stable of liberal, secular experts, and against parents. Constant conflict is an inevitable problem of the public-school monopoly, which ensures that almost all political minorities will be disappointed at one point or another as changing majorities impose their values and preferences. The only consistency in the ACLU's approach is to battle against traditional values of any sort, whether school prayer, abstinence education, or parental decisions.

In fact, there is a good argument against instituting prayer in public schools. Why would any parent want to turn that task over to a nonbelieving teacher working in a public institution that has difficulty teaching kids to read, let alone to think morally? That, however, is not the ACLU's argument.

It is the same with a range of other school issues. Sex education, the Pledge of Allegiance, abstinence or character training, drug tests, military recruitment, and more—yes or no? Instead of forcing interested parents to fight every issue before administrative bureaucrats, elected officials, and appointed judges, depoliticize education by placing it outside of government control. At the very least, let people *choose*—a favorite ACLU word—to escape the present system.

However, the ACLU militantly defends the education monopoly. "Congress must not divert funds to a voucher program that is designed to help only a few students, leaving the vast majority behind," explained the ACLU, in opposing proposals for federal vouchers for students in failing Washington, D.C., schools. Never mind that a student was recently murdered in one of those schools, and, every day, all of these children are left behind.

The ACLU takes the same position on voucher programs for Cleveland, Florida, and Milwaukee. As usual, the group's chief bugaboo is religion, but, for them, it seems, no system which allowed parental control would be acceptable. Turning out successive classes of students who have received neither practical nor moral education is better than giving parents the opportunity to opt out of the government system.

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At base, the ACLU's bias is fundamentally statist: Everyone really should attend citizen-molding public schools. Of course, the form of citizenship taught should bear no relationship to any orthodox faith. Thus, religious parents must pay for public schools that the ACLU attempts to prevent from ever mentioning religion. In its view, the money belongs to the government, not to parents. Vouchers "give public money" to—horrors!—"private and religious schools," fusses the ACLU. Instead, government funds should be spent as the majority sees fit, unless religion is involved in their decision. Unfortunately, the U.S. Supreme Court extended this principle to federal college loans, ruling that a student could not use those benefits to train for the ministry.

The ACLU looks at federal grants through a similar prism. The group has no aversion to Washington's ever-deepening pork barrel. Big government, in the name of helping, is just fine—but not if some religious person or organization receives any benefits. For example, the ACLU has relentlessly opposed the President's faith-based initiative, which would allow religious charities to receive federal social-service grants.

Of course, many people, and especially religious believers, understandably are chary about funding overtly religious groups, especially ones that evangelize. What, however, of religious taxpayers forced to underwrite rigidly secular organizations that rarely are neutral when it comes to values?

Private groups that speak to the whole person, including their moral and spiritual facets, do a better job of treating social problems ranging from poverty to substance abuse. Should those who need help be punished for the faith of the grantee? Alas, no distribution of tax dollars in the public square will ever be fair. If the ACLU could see past its statist and secular biases, it might help rethink Washington's approach to social problems. If it is worried about Church-state entanglements, the ACLU could support shrinking government programs and encouraging people to underwrite private charity, which would address social needs while avoiding discrimination against any people, secular or religious.

The ACLU's uncritical acceptance of the expansive welfare state, combined with its extreme animus toward religion, was evident when the organization attacked the state of New Jersey for providing capital-improvement grants to two Catholic high schools. Such political pork would have been of no concern to the organization if directed to secular private schools or to failing secular public schools. The ACLU similarly persecuted the Boy Scouts, a group that requires devotion to God, refuses to accept homosexuals, and espouses traditional values. The ACLU attempted to force the Scouts to drop their ban on homosexuals, representing an assistant scoutmaster expelled for homosexuality who sued under the Civil Rights Act. Amazingly, the Supreme Court refused to mandate that the Boy Scouts conform—but the ACLU then used the Scouts' new quasireligious status to launch additional assaults.

For instance, the city of San Diego has long leased 18 acres in a local park to the Boy Scouts for a dollar—plus, notably, a commitment to spend $1.7 million over seven years upgrading the land. The public harm in this arrangement was not evident to most people. The ACLU, however, looks hard to discover problems. "Having gone to great lengths to convince the courts that they are a private religious organization with a constitutionally protected right to discriminate, the Boy Scouts cannot now turn around and ask the taxpayers of San Diego for a public subsidy," explained Linda Hills, executive director of the ACLU of San Diego.

After losing at trial, the city turned tail, revoked the lease, and paid the ACLU $950,000 for its costs and fees, leaving the Boy Scouts to fend for themselves. This organization, however, is as worthy as most of the 100 other nonprofits currently using San Diego public facilities. The fact that the Boy Scouts require members to believe generically in God should not disbar them from enjoying the same access to public property available to others.

As this case makes clear, the ACLU does not want neutrality in the public square. It demands hostility to anyone who rejects the dominant liberal *Zeitgeist*. Said Linda Hills: "[W]e deplore the Boy Scouts' desire to exclude gays, atheists, and agnostics from their membership." The group has "no more business receiving a taxpayer subsidy than does the Ku Klux Klan."

Of course, the ACLU would not pay the slightest attention if San Diego had been leasing land to the children of NOW members or a "gay" youth group or a gaggle of student abortion activists. If the issue truly were principle, the answer would be relatively simple: Ban subsidies to all groups of any theological, philosophical, or political stripe. Better yet, sell off the park, and let private people do what they want.

The ACLU's crabbed view even of "civil liberties" is illustrated by its absolutist support for abortion. The organization nominally cares about life, opposing the death penalty. These worthy sentiments, however, do not extend to the unborn.

In fact, it is hard to relish state intervention in a decision that obviously is highly personal, but it is impossible to overlook the inconvenient fact that a human life is at stake. Moreover, responsibility is essential to real freedom. The ACLU often promotes license over liberty. In its view, there should be no restraints on people's choices and no consequences if they make bad decisions. To promote an absolute right to abortion is to say that a woman may exercise the choice of having sex without being responsible for the consequences of creating a child. To enshrine as immutable constitutional law the right to have sex with anyone at any time and the right to destroy the resulting human life in any way at any time is licentiousness, not freedom.

For the ACLU, there can be no compromise on these twin "rights." The organization cannot even bring itself to accept restrictions on partial-birth abortion. After Congress passed another prohibition on the procedure last year, the ACLU promised "an immediate legal challenge to the ban to protect women and their doctors." How about protecting the children? Surely their interest is worth a thought. The ACLU is worried about the burden on women forced to carry children to term and doctors prohibited from plying their bloody trade, yet remains unconcerned about children killed as they emerge from their mothers' wombs.

In fact, the ACLU is focused more on promoting abortion than on protecting women's and doctors' freedoms. The group opposes allowing religious hospitals that collect tax dollars to refuse either to carry out the procedure or to make abortion referrals. Anyone who wants an abortion should be able to get one at any time at any place from anyone. Accept the king's lucre, and you, too, must agree to kill the young.

Moreover, the ACLU opposes legislative proposals to make the killing of a fetus a crime. The group does not look at the issue on its merits, but through the prism of a woman's absolute right to an abortion. As the organization explains, such an approach "is in reality a dangerous attempt to separate a woman

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from her fetus in the eyes of the law." Yet how can any serious person deny the fact that these fetuses are distinct human beings, each of unique moral value?

Similarly disturbing has been the ACLU's intervention in the "right-to-die" case of Terri Schindler Schiavo. The Florida case received public attention last fall but continues to be fought out in court on almost a daily basis. Schiavo suffers from a debilitating brain injury caused by an unexplained collapse. Over her parents' objections, her husband won court approval to let her die (or, less charitably but perhaps more accurately, to kill her) by removing her feeding tube. The state of Florida intervened, ordering the tube reinserted. Everyone claims to be representing her best interests and carrying out her wishes.

Though authorities would normally rely on a spouse's decision, Michael Schiavo may be thinking of more than his wife. He is the trustee of what remains of the cash settlement of a medical malpractice verdict, minus substantial legal fees incurred in the ongoing court battle, which would be his to spend as he likes should his wife die. Money was supposedly set aside for her care, which he has refused to expand. He also is engaged to be married to a woman with whom he has had two children. And there is more than a little testimony that creates suspicion of his motives—such as his public complaint "When is that bitch going to die?"

After the Florida legislature authorized Gov. Jeb Bush to order reconnection of Terri Schiavo's feeding tube, Michael naturally sued to void the law. And just as naturally, the Florida ACLU jumped in on his side to force his wife's death.

It would be one thing to defend a person's clearly expressed desire to choose death in such circumstances. That, however is not the case here. Schiavo and some of his family members claim that Terri indicated no interest in subsisting on tubes, but he conveniently failed to remember such sentiments when suing for money for rehabilitative care. He also apparently told a girlfriend (acquired after Terri's collapse) that he and Terri were too young to have considered the issue.

In any case, there is substantial medical dispute over the potential for improving Terri's condition. Even if she did not desire to live on tubes, would she desire to die if rehabilitative care—barred by Michael—allowed her to function more independently, as many medical experts believe it would? The ACLU is jumping into the middle of a complex family dispute. Why presume that death is the right option, irrespective of whether state officials have intervened? After all, whose civil liberties—among those of Terri Schindler Schiavo, her husband, and her parents—should be protected, and how?

We desperately need an organization that works hard to stop censorship of speech, limit abusive government searches, and ensure that proper criminal procedures are followed. Such efforts are particularly important at a time when even normally sober legislators vote for bills they have not read restricting freedom in the name of fighting terrorism.

Often, however, the ACLU seems to see protecting freedom as merely a means of attacking family and traditional values that it does not like. Parents should not be consulted about educational decisions; religious taxpayers should have no say in the funding of public institutions; and the lives of children and the disabled should be sacrificed in the name of choice. How about an activist organization dedicated to defending both liberty and traditional values, freely expressed?

A Faux-Christian Focus

by Catherine Munch

I have struggled all my life
with anger needed but suppressed,
with grief possessed but denied.

A faux-Christian focus
steals determination,
a too-placid acquiescence

subverts passion.
Even Jesus knew outrage,
horror, He begged for release.

How can God speak,
except by tugging
on the umbilical cord,

that excruciating lesson
that blinding rebirth
of unacceptable emotion?

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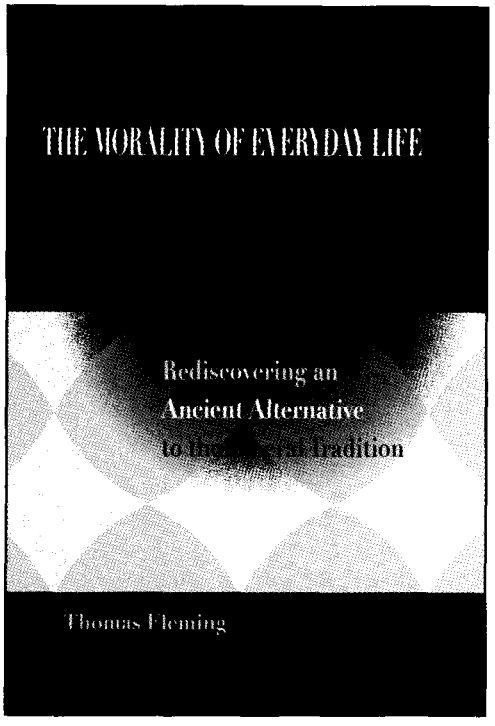

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Booklist

The Morality of Everyday Life: Rediscovering an Ancient Alternative to the Liberal Tradition

by Thomas Fleming

What passes for conservatism today is really nothing more than the impossible moral and social theories of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in which universal abstractions, such as democracy and equality, are presented as hard truths, when, in fact, they have never existed in any society in human history. Nonetheless, they are to be applied worldwide, at the tip of a spear (or cruise missile) if necessary. Dr. Fleming's alternative is rooted in "everyday life," the local realities of blood and soil, custom and tradition, friendship and faith, and in the wisdom born of the experiences these realities beget. This wisdom finds expression in folktales and fables, in ancient Hebrew Scriptures and Greek philosophy, and in medieval casuistry. It is the method to solving ethical problems great and small, and it is the method that undergirds authentic conservatism.

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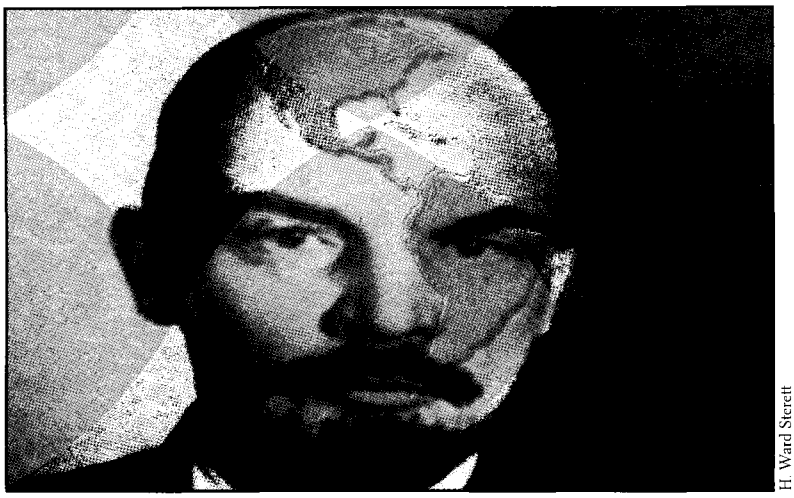
The Myth of an Antiglobalist Left

Marx, Waiting in the Wings

by William R. Hawkins



H. Ward Sterett

As I write, Washington has just been subjected to a weekend of left-wing protests that even the conservative-oriented *Washington Times* estimated brought 500,000 demonstrators to the nation's capital. The March for Women's Lives, with its shrill advocacy of abortion, overshadowed the antiglobalization rally protesting the meetings of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, and G-7 finance ministers. Since mobs disrupted the Seattle session of the World Trade Organization in 1999, the antiglobalization movement has staged protests at every major event associated with the "New World Order" of transnational corporate banking and industry.

That the two rallies should overlap is not surprising, but there is one aspect that has not received the attention it deserves, not even from critics on the right. The promotion of abortion is a direct assault on the family. There is another function of the family that is also under attack by the left, however: its role as a unit of production meeting material needs with dignity and independence.

The popular case for capitalism has long rested heavily on the image of the entrepreneur—the self-reliant, imaginative, independent business owner who is the backbone of the middle class and of republican government. This image is not weakened by the fact that most people are not entrepreneurs but employees. They benefit from the role businessmen play in their community and aspire to join their ranks. The ideal entrepreneur is seen working alongside his employees, rearing a family, and participating in local affairs. Personal success brings a wider prosperity and a sense of social responsibility.

The eclipse of the independent businessman (and woman) by the spread of the large corporation has bothered traditional conservatives. When entrepreneurs become managers, local stores are driven out of business by large retail chains, and factories that serve as the basis for a community's economy are moved overseas by distant corporate directors, conservatives see vital pillars of social stability destroyed. And as the expansion of global supply chains have put the competitive squeeze on middle-class American incomes, families have been further endangered by the means chosen to cope with the stress.

The division of labor in the family between breadwinner and homemaker has been largely eliminated by the need for two incomes to meet expenses, often putting children at risk without parental supervision. Increasing consumer debt has undermined the dream of home ownership as refinancing feeds equity into the maw of deficit spending. The inability to save for retirement and to fund the education of children makes families ever more dependent on government programs such as Social Security and public schools.

The campaign against globalization and transnational capitalism would seem to give those on both the left and right a common enemy. The left, however, cares no more for the family business than it does for the family itself. Its agenda is entirely hostile to the concerns of conservatives across the board.

The foundation of the left's approach to all economic issues comes from Marx and Lenin. At the Washington rally, there was even a protester waving an old Soviet flag. In Marxist theory, the long-term trend of capitalism is for the largest firms to gobble up all of the smaller ones. The corporations with the greatest financial resources survive and expand, exploiting the economies of scale that come from mass production and market power. Ownership of industry becomes more centralized in fewer and fewer entities until a few great financiers control it all. This remaining capitalist class becomes increasingly wealthy, in contrast to the growing misery of the proletariat, which has been expanded by the downward mobility of the

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small businessmen who have lost out in competition to the giant combines.

The left may denounce this process on moral grounds, claiming that it is exploitative, or on political grounds, claiming that it concentrates political power as well as wealth, but they do not want to stop it or reverse it. It is part of the "progressive" self-destruction of the capitalist order that will pave the way for revolution and the establishment of a new socialist order. Society must be stratified by the elimination of the middle class so that only a small oligarchy of the rich stands against the rest of society united in an increasingly discontented working class.

Though the left has complained about CAFTA's diminished labor rights, the focus has been on labor conditions in Central America, not lost jobs in the United States. The "intellectual" left in the universities, media, and NGO's care nothing about America but hope for her demise.

The elimination of the middle class, not just economically but spiritually, is a prerequisite for revolution. The left's assault on "family values," "traditional morality," and orthodox religious belief is meant to complement the economic destruction being wrought by the inevitable grinding process of monopoly capitalism. The more chaotic, empty, and frustrating life becomes for the petite bourgeoisie, the better are the prospects for the radicals.

Take, for example, the American Friends Service Committee. It claims to embrace Quaker religious doctrine but actually reflects Marxism, as shown by the following critique of middle-class aspirations:

> Conventional images of "pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps" and other notions of individual success promote the idea that anyone can succeed in the United States if only they [*sic*] try hard enough. While individuals who succeed "against the odds" are held up as models, the communities they come from remain poor—and the structures that maintain a grossly unjust distribution of wealth and resources do not change.

This statement appears in a policy statement on immigration and racism. It is meant as a warning to immigrants not to be tempted by the capitalist ideology of achievement but to remain loyal to an alien—and alienated—proletariat supporting radical change in a society that the AFSC believes is rapidly losing its white majority.

One of the great success stories of the United States has been its ability to elevate the working class into the middle class. As a result, the United States has had a more moderate and stable domestic order than most countries, within which conservative social values could take root. It is this "reformist" approach that radicals find most dangerous to their ambitions. Increasingly, the left depends on foreign elements to bring down the middle class in ways that will not only undermine the living standards of working-class Americans but of independent business owners as well.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx claimed that, "while the bourgeoisie of each nation still retained separate national interests, big industry created a class, which in all nations has the same interest and with which nationality is already dead." Speaking to the Democratic Association of Brussels in 1848, Marx argued that

> the protective system of our day is conservative, while the free trade system is destructive. It breaks up old nationalities and pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution. It is in this revolutionary sense alone, gentlemen, that I vote in favor of free trade.

Marx overestimated the power of big business in his day to push policy in the direction of free trade against the wider interests of nations whose leaders were still rooted in their native soil. The experiments with free trade in the mid-19th century were largely abandoned by all the major states of Europe (and the United States) by 1890, with the exception of England. The continued survival of conservative forces led to the imperialism theories of J.A. Hobson, Rosa Luxemburg, and Vladimir I. Lenin. Luxemburg saw imperialism as the attempt by nationally based enterprises to find new outlets for capital and exports by creating new protected territories for exploitation. Free trade would destroy this kind of imperialism, just as both the classical liberals and the Marxists desired.

Hobson and Lenin thought more in terms of an international class struggle. Hobson believed that low wages in colonial areas would attract production, leaving only a rentier ruling class in the home countries. Lenin believed that imperialism's superexploitation of the cheaper labor of oppressed minorities at home and in the colonies allowed capitalists to bribe a "worker aristocracy" with middle-class trappings and thus delay the coming of the revolution.

Today's left approaches international issues with a mixture of these theories. Millions of high-wage manufacturing and professional service jobs in the United States have been lost because of imports. Transnational corporations have relocated factories overseas or have outsourced work to foreign contractors. This has changed the balance of power in the labor unions from middle-class, patriotic "hard hats" in industry to government employees and low-wage service workers at hotels, restaurants, and retail chains. It has also expanded the threat from "free trade" beyond the working class to white-collar professionals and business owners in manufacturing who cannot compete with foreign rivals for contract work with the transnational firms.

Those displaced by foreign competition—or who fear that fate—have swelled the ranks of economic nationalists on the

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right demanding policies that will restore a "home-field advantage" to American-based business. The "antiglobalization" left is not composed of nationalists, however, but of progressives whose sympathies lie with "exploited" foreign labor. They want to see more wealth and production capacity transferred from the United States (and other major capitalist states) to the Third World in accordance with the ideas of Hobson and Lenin.

At April's antiglobalization rally in Washington, the lead demand was that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank write off the debts owed by developing nations so that they could raise new capital for investment in local production and infrastructure. The main complaint from the left about the new Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is that, by opening the economies of the region to more efficient U.S. farmers, local agriculture will suffer.

Yet CAFTA is not about U.S. exports. The combined economic output of the six CAFTA states (Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) was only $85 billion in 2002, less than the $92-billion economy of St. Louis, Missouri. CAFTA is really about expanding investment and export-oriented production in Central America, as demonstrated by the agreement's provisions regarding textiles and investment protections. Though the left has complained about CAFTA's diminished labor rights, the focus has been on labor conditions in Central America, not lost jobs in the United States. Only American labor unions worry about the negative impact of trade on the United States. The rest of the "intellectual" left in the universities, media, NGO's and foundations care nothing about America but hope for its demise.

Transnational capitalism is not to be controlled or curtailed by a "retreat" back to nationalism or "protectionism" in the West. The left is not opposed to globalization if it serves a socialist, anti-Western agenda. A typical exponent of this ideology is George Monbiot, a visiting professor of planning at Oxford Brookes University and a columnist for the *Guardian*. He is the author of two antiglobalization books: *The Age of Consent: A Manifesto for a New World Order* and *Captive State: The Corporate Takeover of Britain*. He offers a utopian vision that is to transcend the "obsolete" nation-state. He argues that world trade should be restructured to open advanced countries to Third World exports while allowing backward economies to develop behind their own protectionist barriers. And, indeed, the WTO has been quite willing to appease the left—and its Third World members—by proclaiming the current Doha negotiations a "development round." Any support for U.S.-based business or agriculture is denounced, both in the halls of the WTO and in the streets.

Monbiot does not limit his manifesto to trade. He wants a "revitalized" U.N. General Assembly that would abolish the Security Council (on which the United States and Britain have a veto) and eventually move to a directly elected World Parliament. This is clearly not "antiglobalization" but merely another rehashing of the dream of world government that has been a part of left-liberal philosophy since Immanuel Kant.

All Americans, whether they think of themselves as being in the ranks of business or of labor, would suffer in such a world. While transnational corporations bulldoze societies and tear up national flags, the left waits in the wings to pick up the pieces. c

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Strictly From Hunger

The Morris Dees Story

by Kevin Michael Grace

In his autobiography, *A Season For Justice*, Morris Dees describes his 1967 epiphany in snowbound Cincinnati. Dees was, at the time, a millionaire 31-year-old lawyer, salesman, and publisher. While he had "sympathized with the Civil Rights Movement," he "had not become actively involved." By the time he arrived in Chicago, however, he was determined to "specialize in civil rights law." The defiant Dees declared: "It did not matter what my neighbors would think, or the judges, the bankers, or even my relatives." Morris Dees *contra mundum*. Four decades later, it may be confidently stated that, whatever neighbors, relatives, and judges might think, Dees' bankers have no cause for complaint.

In 1971, Dees cofounded (with Joseph Levin and Julian Bond) the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama. Poverty law is redolent of storefront lawyers with clip-on ties and ponytails sworn to good works. Dees, however, has always believed in doing well by doing good. His former business partner, Millard Fuller, once said that he and Dees "shared the overriding purpose in making a pile of money." He added, "We were not particular about how we did it; we just wanted to be independently rich." After selling his publishing company, Dees bought a luxuriously appointed 200-acre estate. Fuller, on the other hand, repented of his greed, gave a fortune to charity, and founded Habitat for Humanity.

The SPLC is itself a charity, tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. According to its audited financial statement of October 31, 2003, it had total assets of $156.9 million and an endowment fund of $120.5 million. In its last fiscal year, it had revenues of $27.7 million, including $25.4 million in contributions. In 2002, Dees received a salary of $258,048; Levin, $225,535; and general counsel Richard Cohen, $225,535. (Julian Bond is now an unpaid board member.)

In November 2000, Ken Silverstein wrote in *Harper's*:

> Morris Dees doesn't need your financial support. The SPLC is already the wealthiest civil rights group in America . . . Back in 1978, when the center had less than $10 million, Dees promised that his organization would quit fund-raising and live off interest as soon as its endowment hit $55 million. But as it approached that figure, the SPLC upped the bar to $100 million, a sum that, one 1989 newsletter promised, would allow the center "to cease the costly and often unreliable task of fundraising."

According to a 2003 report in the *Fairfax Journal*, the SPLC expended 89 percent of its income on this ostensibly "unreliable" fundraising and on administration.

According to its IRS return, the goals of the SPLC are "to combat hate, intolerance and discrimination through education and litigation" and to "provid[e] legal services for victims of civil rights injustice and hate crimes." The SPLC has specialized in suing to seize the assets of neo-Nazis and Klansmen to compensate victims of racially inspired violence. More recently, it joined with the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State to remove Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore from the bench after he refused to remove his Ten Commandments monument from the state judicial building. General counsel Cohen argued that Moore's granite Decalogue was so offensive to sensitive Alabamians that they purposely avoided the judicial building. Heaven knows what agonies these souls would endure should they ever visit, say, the Lincoln Memorial, with its angel and its invocations of God and the Bible.

The SPLC's primary purpose is not litigation, however, but the pressuring of public opinion. And its "education" is on the order of Joe, the fat boy in Dickens' *Pickwick Papers*, who says, "I wants to make your flesh creep."

In Morris Dees' America, night is always falling. It is a nation of ceaseless cross-burnings and lynchings, where minorities cower endlessly in fear, waiting helplessly for the next assault from the Klan, skinheads, the League of the South, Thomas Fleming, Samuel Francis and *Chronicles*, Peter Brimelow and *VDare.com*, David Horowitz and the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, the American Enterprise Institute . . .

The American Enterprise Institute? Surely there must be some mistake. Not at all. According to the SPLC website (*splcenter.org*):

> Under the name Klanwatch, the Project began monitoring hate activity in 1981. In 1994, after uncovering links between white supremacist organizations and the emerging antigovernment "Patriot" movement, the Center expanded its monitoring operation to include militias and other extremist groups.
>
> Today, the Project tracks more than 700 hate groups around the nation. The quarterly Intelligence Report provides comprehensive updates to law enforcement agencies, the media and the general public.

Clearly, by 1994, even the SPLC realized there was no longer much to fear from the KKK, that tiny band of bedraggled and government-infiltrated losers. Even so, according to the SPLC's most recent *The Year in Hate*, "Buoyed by rising numbers of Skinhead and Klan groups, the American radical right staged something of a comeback last year, following a tumultuous period that saw the destruction or hobbling of some of the nation's leading hate groups."

So what is the connection between AEI and some of the na-

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tion's leading hate groups? Well, you see, AEI "in recent years has sponsored scholars whose views are seen by many as bigoted or even racist." You have to love that passive verb, *seen*. For example? "For example, Dinesh D'Souza." He holds a fellowship there and also holds heterodox opinions on the civil-rights movement. (You might think that D'Souza shopping Samuel Francis to save his own skin and getting him fired from the *Washington Times* would score him points with the SPLC, but apparently not.) More "controversial" still is AEI fellow Charles Murray, who wrote *The Bell Curve*, which cites research funded by the "racist" Pioneer Fund. Why is the Pioneer Fund "racist"? Because it endorses the idea of racial differences. It is a commonplace today for those that believe in the very idea of race to be condemned as "racist," although it is hard to understand how such a thing as "racism" could exist in the absence of races.

The Pioneer Fund is a particular SPLC obsession, as is the immigration-reform movement—in particular, Michigan activist John Tanton, its sinister "puppeteer":

> A four-month investigation by the *Intelligence Report*, conducted in the aftermath of the September terrorist attacks, found that the appearance of an array of groups with large membership bases is nothing more than a mirage. In fact, the vast majority of American anti-immigration groups—more than a dozen in all—were either formed, led, or in other ways made possible through Tanton's efforts.

You have to love that *en passant* reference to "the September terrorist attacks."

The SPLC could doubtless find a connection between immigration reform and September 11 easily enough. The technique it uses to ferret out those "seen" as "racists" is one well known to aficionados of conspiracy theory: "consanguinity." As the old song put it, "I danced with a man who danced with a girl who danced with the Prince of Wales." Or as Thomas Fleming put it, "If Congressman Tom Tancredo or [*American Conservative* executive editor] Scott McConnell has ever met anyone who met anyone who took money from the Pioneer Fund, they must be bigots." By this measure, every person and organization to the right of the Southern Poverty Law Center is beyond the pale—which is precisely the point. Consanguinity is self-evidently a shoddy logical tool. Not so long ago, those on the right who employed it were accused of "McCarthyism." Police departments and schools, however, make use of Dees' smears and "Teaching Tolerance" materials. In 2001, Dees was the recipient of the National Education Association's highest honor, the Friend of Education Award. And whenever any credulous member of the media wants the lowdown on "hate," he gives the SPLC a call.

Other SPLC *bête noires* include "neo-Confederates"; Pat Buchanan; the Bradley, Olin, and Scaife Foundations; the Free Congress Foundation; the Council of Conservative Citizens; the Ludwig von Mises Institute; and the New Century Foundation, publisher of *American Renaissance*.

Those added to the SPLC's enemies list are inclined to consider it a rather higher honor than any NEA gong. David Horowitz, however, was mortified. Horowitz was added for his opposition to reparations for slavery. Two howls of protest were published on Horowitz's website, *FrontPageMag.com*. His own *cri de coeur* was an open letter to Morris Dees, which begged him not to lump him in with the real bad guys:

> You've made yourself a national reputation as a fighter against hate groups. Recently, however, you released a report called "Into the Mainstream" by a leftwing conspiracy theorist named Chip Berlet, which purports to show how "right wing foundations and think tanks support efforts to make bigoted and discredited ideas respectable." This report is so tendentious, so filled with transparent misrepresentations and smears that if you continue to post the report you will create for your Southern Poverty Law Center a well-earned reputation as a hate group itself.

Where has Horowitz been? It is an old story: First, they came for the Pioneer Fund, and I did not speak out because I was not a eugenicist . . . One really does not know who to root for here. It is richly amusing to see David Horowitz, who has used his influence to spread the poisonous notion that the critics of neoconservatives are antisemitic, now forced to defend himself against the charge of "racism."

Of course, Morris Dees would have to go back to peddling cookbooks if so many white Americans were not terrified by the mere suggestion they might be "racist." Alone among Western countries, America has yet to surrender fully to the demand for speech codes and "hate" legislation. For the time being, enforcing the dictates of "tolerance" is a nongovernmental (though tax-free) activity. And Morris Dees' only rival for Commissar of Tolerance is Abe Foxman of the Anti-Defamation League.

The ADL, of course, has recently branched out into film criticism and promotion. Foxman's campaign against Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* not only failed to kill the movie but succeeded in making it one of the most profitable movies in history, with domestic receipts of $370 million and worldwide receipts of over $600 million.

Not to be left behind, the SPLC has also entered the movie-review racket. In January, its website *tolerance.org* reprinted an article by Andrea Lewis entitled "A 'Return' of the White Patriarchy?" According to Lewis, "The '[Lord of the] Rings' films are like promotional ads for those tired old race and gender [*sic*] paradigms that were all the rage back in author J.R.R. Tolkien's day. Almost all of the heroes of the series are manly men who are whiter than white." Conspiracy mongering has certainly moved forward from the days when "Puff the Magic Dragon" was "revealed" to be a marijuana allegory. Lewis prefers the new race and sex paradigms of the *Matrix* films, where "a multi-culti group of hackers dressed in black leather and sporting funky hairdos are our heroes; Secret Service-type 'agents' in suits and ties are the bad guys."

By the time Lewis's jeremiad appeared, it was too late to kill the *Rings* series. It had already made billions. It was not too late, however, to influence the Academy Awards. Still, the Academy, not known to be an especially right-wing organization, was not interested. *The Return of the King* was nominated for 11 Oscars and won every single one.

This Tale of Three Epics suggests that the SPLC, for all its millions in donations, may, like the ADL, have passed its peak. For if the hobbits of the Shire and the American Enterprise Institute are "racist," then everybody is "racist"—or no one is. Or the term no longer has any utility. Or as Peter Brimelow says, "A racist is someone who is winning an argument against a liberal."

Movie buffs will recall that a TV movie was made about Dees. *Line of Fire: The Morris Dees Story* was released in 1991. In a delicious irony, this hagiography starred Corbin Bernsen, best remembered as the slimy lawyer Arnie Becker from *L.A. Law*.

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Washington's Imperial Socialism

American Marxism in Iraq

by Ted Galen Carpenter

Critics have castigated the Bush administration's nation-building venture in Iraq as a manifestation of U.S. imperialism. That is an apt description of the Iraq mission, as well as the ongoing missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. America's nation-building bureaucrats are not pursuing just any kind of imperialism, however: It is a distinctly left-of-center variety. As the mission in Iraq shows, an ostensibly conservative U.S. administration is helping to install a system of politically correct welfare-state socialism.

Under the guidance of Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the hand-picked Iraqi Governing Council is busy building a state structure that bears little resemblance to the ideas American conservatives advocate at home. In a country of barely 25 million people, Iraqi ministries plan to have nearly 1,048,000 employees on the payroll this year. Overall government spending is similarly outsized. The Governing Council projects spending to hit $13.4 billion this year, $19.2 billion in 2005, and $19.7 billion in 2006. Yet Iraq's entire gross domestic product is estimated at about $25 billion. Those spending levels would create a staggering burden on the Iraqi economy were it not for the anticipated U.S. reconstruction aid funds (a little over $18 billion this year). Still, that aid flow will not go on forever (at least one hopes not). What will the Iraqis do about such excessive spending when they have to rely solely on their own sources of revenue? Bremer and his associates are not exactly teaching the Iraqis the fundamentals of sound fiscal policy.

It is not just the overall spending levels that are troubling. With Washington's blessing, Iraq is building the same type of elephantine bureaucratic structure that is so typical of left-wing, Third World countries. The interim government has no fewer than 25 ministries, including such "vital" ones as Culture, Environment, Labor and Social Affairs, Transport, Water Resources, and—my personal favorite—Youth and Sport. Many of those bureaucracies involve missions that are either unnecessary or could be performed far better by the private sector. Perhaps most ominous for Iraq's economic future is that there is a large Ministry of Planning.

Washington has also helped to establish a powerful central bank. It is especially troubling that the bank will extend loans directly to businesses rather than using private banks as intermediaries. That is yet another method by which the government in Baghdad can exert a tremendous amount of control over economic activity in the future. Indeed, given the current plans, there would appear to be little or no role for private banking in the "new Iraq" that the United States is helping to create.

The language and arguments the CPA and Governing Council use to promote their policies also reflect redistributionism and other strategies that rely on government control over economic affairs. For example, the 2004 budget for the Iraqi government lists a generous safety net for the poor as one of the "core principles" guiding Iraq's economic-policy agenda. The old Baath government had a large number of programs for transfer payments, and the new regime is retaining most of them, including one referred to as a "family social bonus." The new interim constitution guarantees, among others, "rights" to healthcare, education, and social security.

There is little evidence of a drive to privatize key elements of the Iraqi economy. Indeed, the CPA stands by while the Governing Council continues to operate mundane commercial enterprises such as the Al-Raasheed Hotel. More worrisome, at this point it appears that Iraq's crucial and potentially lucrative oil industry will be largely government owned and operated.

If any good resides at the commanding heights of the Iraq economy, it is oil. Iraq's American masters, however, are not content to leave the extraction and export of petroleum to the private sector and market forces. The CPA intends to make the Oil Products Distribution Company, which will be owned by the Ministry of Oil, responsible for the vast majority of the oil extraction that takes place. Even today, any private-sector extraction and export of petroleum requires explicit permission from the Ministry of Oil or one of its affiliates, a regional governor, or the CPA. The limited private commerce in oil that is allowed is heavily regulated by the Ministry of Oil, which has an obvious incentive to limit the scope of any competition to its own enterprise. And the penalties for unauthorized attempts at entrepreneurship are draconian. Any person convicted of violating the oil regulations may be imprisoned and fined up to five times the value of the petroleum products purchased, sold, or transported.

The CPA does not appear to believe in the American model of private media ownership either. Instead, the U.S. authorities have shown enthusiasm for state-run radio and television networks and government-owned newspapers. Instead of breaking up Saddam Hussein's media monopoly, the CPA simply took it over, renamed it the Iraq Media Network, and hired an American firm to run it. That operation includes a national newspaper as well as radio and television networks.

Not surprisingly, the IMN operations devote extensive coverage to statements made by officials in the United States, the CPA, and the Governing Council. Critics of those institutions and their policies get little exposure. In addition, the CPA has given the IMN the power to regulate and license all non-IMN radio and television stations, thus creating an obvious conflict of interest and a powerful incentive to retard the development

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of private competitors. Having been granted this authority over radio and television, the IMN began to consider a proposal to require all newspapers to obtain licenses—something that would be anathema in the United States.

It is true that private media outlets have emerged in Iraq, but when such enterprises have to go up against well-funded government competitors, they operate at a serious disadvantage. That gives whichever political faction ultimately controls the government in Baghdad an extensive ability to propagandize the population and marginalize dissenting views. That is especially true if most of the nationwide radio and TV broadcasting is in the hands of a quasigovernmental entity. Given that Iraq will emerge from American tutelage as (at best) an embryonic democracy, setting up a state-run media conglomerate is a most unwise step.

The system that the U.S. authorities have brought to Iraq embraces government ownership of key sectors of the economy, an extensive social-welfare apparatus, and a state-dominated media. Those are characteristics that undoubtedly appeal to leftists around the world, but they are alien to America's traditions and values.

And the Iraq mission is not unique in that regard. It replicates many of the policies that the United States and its European allies have imposed in Bosnia and Kosovo. After more than eight years of Western ministrations, Bosnia's economy is only marginally freer than it was when it was part of socialist Yugoslavia under the dictatorship of Josip Broz Tito. Indeed, according to the latest edition of the Heritage Foundation's *Index of Economic Freedom*, Bosnia ranks a dismal 99th—mired in the "mostly unfree" category between those paragons of democratic capitalism, Algeria and Tanzania. State-run enterprises are endemic in that country, as they are in the international colony of Kosovo.

Americans have ample reasons to be uneasy about Washington's nation-building missions in Iraq and the Balkans. Those ventures bear more than a slight resemblance to imperialism, and they are often regarded as such by subject populations. That is bad enough. It is worse, however, when America's nation builders encourage, and sometimes impose, policies that have brought political repression and economic stagnation (or worse) to so many societies. It is unlikely that the American people expected a supposedly conservative administration to enshrine the virtues of socialism abroad. Yet that is what the Bush administration is doing. This President's betrayal of conservative principles in foreign policy is now complete.

A Crescent Moon
by Catherine Munch

A crescent moon lies cradled in the pine trees,
Venus, radiant, is waiting close nearby.
Barn, hills, silo rise against the blue-black;
All gesture towards the stars up in the sky.

As is my habit I'm awake before the rest,
Slipping out into the dark, as usual, this morning.
I pick up the paper, scan the skies and pause to test
Whether appreciation or apprehension marks this dawning.

There is no traffic snarl across the heavens,
Only Orion striding patiently to the sea,
Peace is to be found in such predictable night times;
Yesterday's concerns now no concern to me.

As this day's sun just lightly crests the horizon,
I turn, and with my hand upon the door, take
One last moment, unwilling to lose this quiet, but
Provisioned for whatever the morning may have in store.

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Russell Kirk and the Negation of Ideology

by Scott P. Richert

"The magnificent cause of being, / The imagination, the one reality / In this imagined world . . . "

—Wallace Stevens

Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology
by W. Wesley McDonald
Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press; 243 pp., $44.95

Russell Kirk (far right, front) at a Chronicles *editorial meeting*

Though ten years have passed since his death on April 29, 1994, Russell Kirk has yet to be the subject of a definitive intellectual biography. In his own posthumously published autobiography, *The Sword of Imagination: Memoirs of a Half-Century of Literary Conflict* (1995), Kirk did not pretend to present a comprehensive summary of his thought, striving instead to render imaginatively the most important scenes of his life. The result is a book that many of us who knew Kirk find ourselves returning to more and more as time goes by, not to remind ourselves where he stood on thus-and-such, but to conjure his shade when our memories, sadly, grow dim. The third-person narrative, about which I had my doubts when I reviewed the memoirs for *Chronicles*, now seems a comfort, because Kirk's voice comes through perhaps more strongly than it would have if he had written in the first person. Despite its great charms, however, *The Sword of Imagination* is not the place for the student of Kirk to discover the fullness of the content of Kirk's thought.

Nor, for that matter, is James E. Person, Jr.'s admirable *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind* (1999). Person does yeoman's work in summarizing Kirk's major writings, especially his fiction, which has too often been neglected by scholars of Kirk, and he provides a selected bibliography that fills in many of the gaps since the publication of Charles Brown's comprehensive *Russell Kirk: A Bibliography* in 1982. For the Kirk scholar, Person's book is indispensable; it is not, however, definitive.

And thus the field was clear for W. Wesley McDonald, who, along with Person and Charles Brown, probably had the greatest access to Kirk and his massive collection of correspondence and manuscripts over the years. McDonald first took up residence at Piety Hill, Kirk's home in Mecosta, Michigan, in the summer of 1969, acting as Kirk's assistant. In his Preface, he describes his earliest experiences with Kirk, experiences that will seem familiar to anyone who had the privilege of visiting Kirk at his home:

> At dinner I struggled to make intelligent conversation. My efforts elicited only an occasional "uh-huh." . . . I interpreted his taciturn responses as a form of rejection. He must think I'm an idiot, I began to fear. Annette, though, sensing my anguish, barked, "Russell, speak to the boy!" Only after this admonition did he answer my question about Cardinal Newman's Illative Sense.

McDonald's personal reminiscences are touching, but, sadly, his purpose in this book does not allow him to include many. Instead, after a brief biographical sketch drawn largely from Kirk's *Confessions of a Bohemian Tory*, McDonald spends the rest of Chapter 1 outlining the role that Kirk played in returning conservatism to respectability in the intellectual environment of the 1950's, in which liberalism had, until the publication of Kirk's doctoral dissertation, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Santayana*, enjoyed hegemony. He deftly describes the tensions between Kirk's brand of conservatism and the emerging libertarian strains represented by Friedrich Hayek and Ludwig von Mises before transitioning, appropriately, into the main focus of the book: Kirk's rejection of ideology in all its forms and his conviction that conservatism, properly understood, is "the negation of ideology." Instead, Kirk believed, conservatism is "the defense of [an objective universal] moral order against its ideological adversaries of both the Left and the Right."

This distinction between conservatism and ideology is fundamental to a proper understanding of Kirk's thought. It is, at once, both the greatest strength of Kirk's intellectual vision and, as Thomas Fleming and Claes Ryn have each pointed out, potentially its greatest weakness, because it leads Kirk to a distrust of reason that, in the end, may have prevented him from approaching conservative thought in a

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properly philosophical cast of mind.

McDonald tries to smooth over this tension by making it appear to be largely a semantic problem: Kirk used the term *ideology* in a more limited way; his critics (even those who are also his admirers) use it to mean "any set of beliefs." Here, McDonald misses the point, and the misunderstanding leads to a greater problem in his second chapter, on "The Moral Basis of Conservatism," where he writes:

> A certain degree of philosophical imprecision exists in Kirk's thought that complicates the explication of his ideas. Kirk was not a philosopher in the technical sense of that word (as he readily admitted), and therefore was not concerned in his work with the formal analysis of basic philosophical concepts.

McDonald tries to correct this gap in Kirk's thought by imposing a philosophical structure on it. He justifies this in his Introduction by pointing to Kirk's own admission that Irving Babbitt

> has influenced me more strongly than has any other writer of the twentieth century. It was through Babbitt that I came to know Edmund Burke, and Babbitt, as much as Burke, animates my book, *The Conservative Mind*.

The problem is that the philosophical framework into which he attempts to fit Kirk's thought is not truly Babbitt's (which, on the basis of Kirk's remark, might be justifiable) but that of "contemporary disciples" of Babbitt "whose work has done much to make their thought relevant to later generations," particularly McDonald's teacher (and mine) at The Catholic University of America, Claes Ryn.

Ryn and his mentor, Folke Leander, have done important work in systematizing and extending Babbitt's thought, especially in *Will, Imagination, and Reason: Irving Babbitt and the Problem of Reality* (1986). As a supplement and an extension to Kirk's thought, these reflections might someday bear useful fruit, but in the context of McDonald's book, they ultimately distract from the more important question: Why did Kirk choose not to write philosophical works?

As McDonald indicates, Kirk certainly understood that he was not writing systematic philosophy; at the same time, it would be unjust to imply that Kirk, had he set his mind to it, would have been incapable of philosophical reflection. Instead, his decision not to write such works, I would argue, was a deliberate one: They were not what "the rising generation" needed most.

Kirk took from both Babbitt and Burke an emphasis on the moral imagination; almost always, he speaks of "imagination and right reason," in that order, because he understood that reason can only work upon the material that imagination provides. When men's imagination is depraved or—perhaps worse—deprived, their reason cannot be expected to create anything other than the distorting and destructive ideologies that Kirk despised. Thus Kirk, in *The Sword of Imagination*:

> Mr. Reagan was endowed with a certain power of imagination; successful actors almost necessarily have a talent for image-making. His successor, President Bush, expressed his distaste for the "vision thing." At that time, Kirk hoped that Mr. Bush was disavowing political utopianism; but no, it turned out that Bush really repudiated political imagination, so that he was unable to foresee probable consequences of his own policies and utterances.

In a similar vein, Kirk, after commenting on two sentences of Burke that contain no fewer than seven historical allusions, wrote in the Introduction to the Seventh Revised Edition of *The Conservative Mind* that "To remind [men and women with a disposition to preserve and an ability to reform] of their inheritance of thought and feeling, *The Conservative Mind* was written."

To remind, to bring to mind, to cause to remember—and memory is just the extension of imagination through time. The house, if it is to stand, must be built upon a firm foundation, and Kirk set about laying the stones.

In his discussion of "The Moral Imagination, Reason, and Natural Law" in Chapter 3, McDonald succinctly expresses the heart of Kirk's thought (and the reason why conservatives are foolish to dismiss Kirk's fiction as somehow less important than his other works) when he writes:

> Myth, fable, allegory, parable, and fantasy are poetic instruments to arouse our imagination by bringing us back to the central concerns of life. They "are not falsehoods," Kirk assured us; "on the contrary, they are means for penetrating to the truth by appealing to the moral imagination."

The strongest part of the book, this chapter nevertheless will not be without its critics, because of McDonald's insistence that "a close examination of [Kirk's] work reveals aspects of his thought inconsistent with the consensual Christian natural law position typically attributed to him." While Kirk's moral principles were not contrary to natural law, "his moral epistemology significantly differed from that employed by natural law theorists."

This is a minefield, and likely one of the things McDonald had in mind when he wrote in his Preface:

> One of my goals in writing this book is to rescue Russell Kirk from his hagiographers, who, since his death, sometimes venerate him at the expense of understanding the substance of his thought or quote him selectively to promote agendas that would have been foreign to his thinking and nature.

Conservative Catholic admirers of Kirk will undoubtedly object, but McDonald is close to the truth. In his final years, Kirk embarked on an extensive study of natural law, which resulted in a 1993 Heritage Foundation speech (a version of which he also delivered at The Catholic University of America) entitled "The Case For and Against Natural Law." Two things are obvious from the speech: To the extent that Kirk is a natural-law thinker, his understanding of natural law is, like Burke's, closer to the Ciceronian natural-law tradition than to the medieval scholastic one; and, for Kirk, the imagination, not reason, is the primary faculty through which we comprehend the truths of natural law. That is not to say that Kirk's understanding is incompatible with Christian natural-law theory, though it certainly diverges from today's neo-Thomism, whose exponents suffer from a peculiarly modern conception of reason. Indeed, an enterprising student of Kirk and natural law might profitably examine the extent to which Kirk ascribes to the imagination functions that the scholastics attributed to reason. McDonald makes some efforts

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in this direction, but there is still much more work to do.

A delicate matter needs to be mentioned. McDonald does not address Kirk's relationship with *Chronicles*, and, indeed, there is no particular reason why he would, since *Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology* does not pretend to be an exhaustive biography. However, in an online colloquy on his book sponsored by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* in May (the text is available at *chronicle.com/colloquylive/2004/05/kirk/*), McDonald, responding to a question about Kirk's relationship with *Chronicles* and Pat Buchanan, wrote:

> I am a little puzzled by Mr. Kenner's assertion that Kirk is frequently associated with Chronicles magazine. Chronicles is edited by Thomas Fleming and publishes articles by noted paleoconservatives such as Paul Gottfried, Sam Francis, Justin Raimondo and Peter Brimelow. However, I can't recall Kirk ever contributing anything to its pages. In any case, he was not particularly close to either its editors or most of its contributors. During the 1980s, when the Chronicles was a tiny fledging publication, I remember Kirk and I having a brief conversation about it, and he didn't seem then to be very enthusiastic about the magazine.

McDonald must certainly know that, "In an unwonted outburst of kindliness" (as Kirk put it), Kirk broke his long-standing rule against appearing on the masthead of publications and agreed to become a contributing editor to *Chronicles*. A cursory glance through back issues reveals that Kirk wrote at least a dozen articles and reviews for *Chronicles* after The Ingersoll Foundation bestowed on him the Richard M. Weaver Award for Scholarly Letters in 1984. A quick examination of Kirk's correspondence with Thomas Fleming and other editors of *Chronicles* (available in the Kirk papers as well as in our files) indicates that about half of those articles were written at the request of the editors and the other half at Kirk's suggestion. While Kirk could be merely cordial in his correspondence or (as McDonald well knows) could delegate the duty of a reply to one of his assistants, almost all of his correspondence with *Chronicles* came from his own typewriter, and the tone is always very warm. Kirk intervened with foundations to raise money for the magazine and took an active role in the Ingersoll Prizes. Tom Fleming, who began corresponding with Kirk in the late 70's and published him in the first issue of the *Southern Partisan* before coming to *Chronicles*, was a guest at Piety Hill, and Kirk recommended more than one of his assistants for a position at *Chronicles*.

Even when, in June 1992, Kirk asked to be removed from the masthead, he did so for reasons of friendship and loyalty and not because of a divergence of principles. *Chronicles* had published a *Cultural Revolutions* piece by Greg Kaza (then a member of the Michigan House of Representatives) questioning the politics of first-term Michigan governor John Engler, and Kirk felt compelled to resign in solidarity with his "close ally and disciple" (Kirk's words).

Despite this institutional parting of ways, Kirk continued his correspondence with Tom Fleming, and the two collaborated on the English translation and publication of Eugenio Corti's *The Red Horse*. Moreover, Kirk's decision to abandon sitting president George H.W. Bush (whom he had supported in 1988) and to act as general chairman of Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign in the Michigan primary in 1992 (a fact curiously omitted from McDonald's book) left little doubt about where his political allegiances lay.

In his comments on *Chronicles*, McDonald would seem to have fallen into the same error that he wrote his book to combat, ascribing his own feelings about the magazine to Kirk. His Kirk, unlike the historical one, seems placed, as McDonald's colleague Paul Gottfried has remarked, equidistant between the neoconservatives and the paleoconservatives. This may account for another curious omission: When McDonald discusses Kirk's infamous 1988 Heritage Foundation speech on "The Neoconservatives" (and criticizes Kirk for believing that neoconservatism "would not long remain a powerful force"), he does not quote the one line from that speech that helped define the emerging struggle between neoconservatives and paleoconservatives. "Not seldom has it seemed," Kirk declared, "as if some eminent Neoconservatives mistook Tel Aviv for the capital of the United States." A few years later, in another Heritage Foundation speech, Kirk repeated that line verbatim. In the wake of the Gulf War, which he had opposed, he clearly understood that those words carried even greater meaning.

Kirk had agreed to join the editorial board of *Chronicles* in August 1988; he delivered "The Neoconservatives" at the Heritage Foundation in October of that year; but he did not actually appear on the masthead of *Chronicles* until May 1989. Surprisingly, the symbolism of Kirk's appearance on the masthead in that particular issue—the neoconservative reaction to which accelerated the events that led to the decision by The Rockford Institute's board of directors to sever relations with Richard John Neuhaus, the director of the Institute's New York-based Center on Religion & Society—has been missed by most paleoconservatives. To the neoconservatives, however, it must have seemed that the opposition was convening at Gondor for the final battle.

These are not inconsequential problems for a book that bills itself a discussion of Russell Kirk and the age of ideology. Today, in both politics and culture, neoconservatism is the reigning ideology. Busy charting a safe path down the middle of the battlefield, McDonald misses an opportunity to apply Kirk's insights to the raging war.

There is, of course, no way to say with certainty how Kirk would have reacted to the acceleration of the political and cultural decline of the United States since his death in 1994, but few who knew him can doubt that the man who wrote in his memoirs that "during 1991 Kirk would come to detest Bush for his carpet-bombing of the Cradle of Civilization with its taking of a quarter of a million lives in Iraq" would have been even more horrified by the current war, fought at the behest of those very neoconservatives who mistake Tel Aviv for Washington, D.C. (or is it, today, the other way around?). And of the recent election of neoconservative godmother Midge Decter as president of the venerable conservative discussion group The Philadelphia Society—well, some things are best left unsaid.

McDonald's book deserves a place alongside Person's biography in the canon of Kirk scholarship, but, falling prey to its own form of hagiography in glossing over Kirk's role in the most important political and intellectual struggles of his final years, it falls short of being the definitive intellectual biography of this giant of conservative thought. For that book, Russell Kirk still waits. c

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The Dialectic of Suicide

by Samuel Francis

"A nation never falls but by suicide."

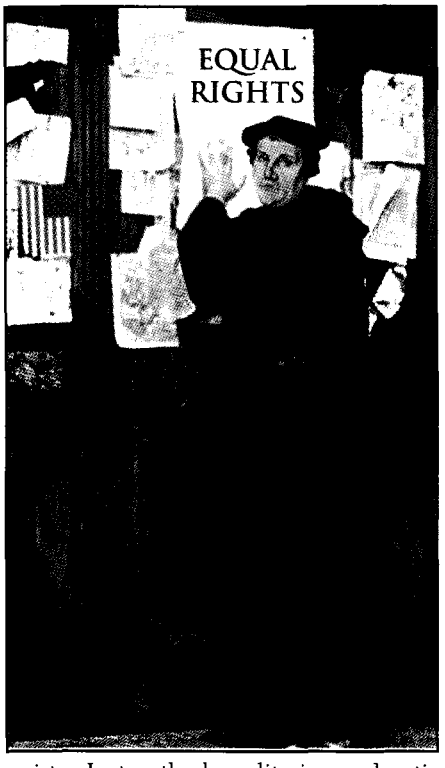
—R.W. Emerson

Who Are We? The Cultural Core of American National Identity
by Samuel P. Huntington
New York: Simon and Schuster;
408 pp., $27.00

◆

The ambush was prepared and actually triggered several months before Samuel Huntington's *Who Are We?* appeared in print. When Mr. Huntington, the author of *The Clash of Civilizations* and a leading political scientist at Harvard, published last winter an excerpt from his new book dealing with the threat posed to American national cultural identity by mass immigration from Latin America, he was lambasted almost at once in the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, and the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, while the *Washington Post* ran a tinny *Style* section satire ridiculing his thesis and the idea that immigration could ever possibly be a "threat" to anyone. Probably not since the publication of *The Bell Curve* in 1994 have the serried ranks of the establishment media and the ruling class they serve closed so quickly on a book offering ideas they find inconvenient to their myths and interests.

The threat they perceived had nothing to do with mass immigration or the loss of a cultural core identity that Huntington laments but, rather, with the prospect that anyone, especially a major Harvard academic of Huntington's stature, might think immigration could threaten the American nation's "cultural identity," let alone that such an "identity"



H. Ward Sterett

exists. Just as the hereditarian and anti-egalitarian implications of *The Bell Curve* had to be concealed as quickly as possible, so Huntington's ideas had to be strangled in their cradle. What the Harvard professor is saying in *Who Are We?* is—in many but not all respects—very much the same as what Pat Buchanan, Peter Brimelow, *Chronicles*, Chilton Williamson, Jr., and I, among several others, have been saying about mass immigration for years or decades. And when these ideas seep down to places like Harvard, the ruling class sniffs trouble.

Huntington argues that America indeed has a "cultural core identity," that it is not just a "creedal nation" as liberals and most neoconservatives and libertarians like to assert, and that this identity is the "Anglo-Protestant core" created by British settlers of the 17th and 18th centuries—an identity that produced American political institutions and values, national economic and intellectual achievements, and national coherence as a unified society. He argues further that, today, this identity is under threat from two major forces: mass immigration, mainly Mexican but also Hispanic generally, by peoples who, owing to their numbers and their own cultural attachments, do not and cannot assimilate to the Anglo-Protestant core; and "America's business, professional, intellectual, and academic elites" who have rejected national identity of any kind and (in the case of intellectual elites at least) have abandoned "commitment to their nation and their fellow citizens and argue the moral superiority of identifying with humanity at large." On the latter point, Huntington joins the late Christopher Lasch, James Burnham, and other analysts of the American ruling class.

So far, the argument will be thoroughly familiar to *Chronicles* readers, since various writers have pushed virtually the same ideas here; there are, however, differences between their ideas and Huntington's. In the first place, while paleoconservatives have, for the most part, rejected the very concept of an "American Creed" as the defining element of the national identity, Huntington, for all his qualifications of the idea, insists on retaining it. Against the creedal nationalists (who mainly tell us that the equality language of the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address constitute the abstractions to which American society must be made to conform by the federal government, and to which the rest of the planet must be made to conform by America), Huntington insists that the United States is defined by more than that. Nevertheless, he argues that the na-

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tion does have a creed, the main exponents of which have been "foreign observers from Crevecoeur to Tocqueville, Bryce, and [Gunnar] Myrdal." These he understands, with the creedal nationalists, to incorporate the "political principles of liberty, equality, democracy, individualism, human rights, the rule of law, and private property," and the "American Creed"—in other words, liberalism.

Huntington rightly insists, however, that the creed is not all there is; that the creed itself is simply the result of the "Anglo-Protestant core" that created the nation in the first place and that, so far from being universal or existing *in abstracto* as an independent metaphysical substance, the creed cannot exist apart from the cultural core from which it arose and upon which it depends for its survival. It never appears to dawn on Huntington that his claim contains a central contradiction: The creed purports to be universal, but, if it is really *not* universal, it is false.

Insofar as a creed exists, Huntington is entirely correct in calling it a cultural artifact specific to American society and not a universal truth that all human beings everywhere and at all times yearn to embrace, nor a force of nature or supernature. The liberalism that the creed embodies is simply an ideology boiled down from various philosophical writers of the 18th and 19th centuries and adapted to suit convenient political purposes and group interests of the hour: the aspirations of the middle classes in the Industrial Revolution; the working classes of the 19th and 20th centuries; and, more recently still, the sexual, ethnic, and racial collectives that have crept out of the cultural woodwork in our own day. Like any other "creed," that of liberalism may be true or false, and must be judged accordingly. It is not (as the very term, in capital letters, suggests) a dogma like the Apostle's Creed or the Nicene Creed that defines divinely revealed orthodoxies and to which all must adhere on pain of excommunication.

In truth, there simply is no such thing as the "American Creed" at all. There are a Declaration of Independence, a Constitution, a Bill of Rights, a Gettysburg Address, and lots of other documents, speeches, laws, books, and statements of one sort or another thrown up over the course of American history, but there is no such document called by anyone the "American Creed." American society, like every other human society that is not the concoction of ideologues, has no creed. It has a way of life, a culture, an identity manifested in the actual institutions, values, and conduct of its people; any formula that seeks to reduce that identity to the kind of sound bites that the editors of *National Review* and the *Weekly Standard* can understand necessarily distorts, falsifies, and (in Michael Oakeshott's term) abridges the real tradition.

That is why not just Mexican or Hispanic immigration but immigration generally—the introduction of any new element that is foreign to the society—threatens the cultural identity of the nation. In the 19th century, as Huntington acknowledges, the United States passed from an "Anglo" nation (defined by its almost entirely British, and largely English, population) to a "Euro" one (in which European immigrants and their descendants played an increasingly important and shaping role). He is correct in saying that the European immigrants assimilated much more easily than today's non-European immigrants are doing because, despite not being British, they were close enough to Anglo-American cultural identities to conform relatively easily to the main patterns of language, religion, political institutions, and folkways. The pan-European immigration of the 19th century did, however, change the Anglo-Protestant core in significant ways. One can argue that this change was for the better, or at least had a neutral effect, but its reality should not be doubted, despite the far tougher enforcement of assimilation by the elites of that era.

The other major problem with Huntington's argument stems from his evident nervousness about how his book will be received. He hastens to assure us in the Foreword,

> This is, let me make clear, an argument for the importance of Anglo-Protestant culture, not for the importance of Anglo-Protestant people. I believe one of the greatest achievements, perhaps the greatest achievement, of America is the extent to which it has eliminated the racial and ethnic components that historically were central to its identity and has become a multiethnic, multiracial society in which individuals are judged on their merits. That has happened, I believe, because of the commitment successive generations of Americans have had to the Anglo-Protestant culture and the Creed of the founding settlers.

There are two major problems here. First, it is by no means evident that there can be any Anglo-Protestant culture at all without an Anglo-Protestant people. Culture does not fall out of the sky. It is a product of the human beings who create it, and, as Huntington keeps insisting, when masses of people carrying one culture enter into another society with another culture, the result must be conflict (dare we say a "clash of civilizations"?) and change. The newcomers assimilate to the host, or the host assimilates to them, or both assimilate to each other. The impossibility of retaining a given culture intact with an entirely different population from an entirely different culture may be the result, in part, of biological differences, but, in most cases, it is more likely to reflect the difficulty or impossibility of one people stripping away their cultural legacies and garbing themselves in another. If this metamorphosis is possible at all, it would be nice if someone who advocates or celebrates it would tell us when and where it has ever been accomplished.

The second problem with Huntington's claim, deriving from the contradiction mentioned above, is that, by his own argument, the "Anglo-Protestant core" has promoted and legitimized its own destruction. The major part of his book is a well-documented and well-articulated explanation of how contemporary non-European mass immigration threatens to undermine the core cultural identity of the country; yet Huntington starts off in the above-quoted passage telling us how that same core culture, and the "Creed" supposedly drawn from it, have made mass immigration possible by the elimination of "racial and ethnic barriers." Of course, eliminating our racial and ethnic barriers has done nothing to eliminate the immigrants' racial and ethnic barriers, which are retained and enforced against the dwindling population that made the "Anglo-Protestant" culture possible in the first place. The "Creed," like other forms of liberalism, is a formula for the suicide of the race and civilization that bred it, but there is no evidence that Professor Huntington gets the point.

Does this mean that America, with its Anglo-Protestant core identity, was a suicidal society from its very beginnings? If the "Creed" that Huntington thinks to be the greatest achievement of American culture were what he claims it is,

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then, yes, that is what it would mean. It is simply not true, however, that "the Anglo-Protestant culture and the Creed of the founding settlers" were as Huntington and other creedalists describe it, and, at various places in his book, he seems well aware of this, though at others he does not. In some places, his account borders on the absurd, as in the statement, "For over two hundred years the creedal principle of equal rights for all without regard to race had been ignored and flouted in practice in American society, politics, and law." If Americans persistently flouted their own "Creed," in what sense can we say it was their creed at all?

In fact, it was not. The "Creed" that Huntington insists is such an important part of the national identity barely existed until the early 20th century and acquired dominance in American culture and politics only during its course. The Protestant Republic the British settlers and pioneers created in North America knew nothing of it, or of its happy talk about "eliminating racial and ethnic barriers." As Huntington also acknowledges, the first naturalization law in American history confined citizenship to whites. The republic was a racial state and remained one, in principle, until the 14th Amendment was imposed at the point of bayonets and, in practice, until the "civil rights" era.

Having eliminated these barriers, we now discover that the mass immigration that ensued does not much care for the Anglo-Protestant culture and, in fact, offers its own creeds. Mr. Huntington's book is an excellent documentation of the process by which the incoming races and their civilizations are in a protracted clash with those of the old America and of how the ruling elites of the present are facilitating the destruction of the latter, but he gives little sign of understanding how the old America might yet resist the conquest and recover its own country again. ¢

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SIGNS OF THE APOCALYPSE

"'Same-sex Marriage: A Lesbian Christian Perspective' with Rev. Eva O'Diam, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of Harrisburg, 7:30 p.m., at the Young Center for the Study of Anabaptist and Pietist Groups."

—from an event listing for Elizabethtown (PA) College

Why Johnny Shouldn't Vouch

by Laurence M. Vance

School Choices: True and False
by John Merrifield
Oakland: The Independent Institute; 97 pp., $15.95

Voucher Wars: Waging the Legal Battle over School Choice
by Clint Bolick
Washington, D.C.: The Cato Institute; 277 pp., $20.00

◆

For some time now, the panacea offered by conservatives and libertarians for improving the education of American youth has been vouchers. There is no question that government schools are failing miserably. There is plenty of teaching about the wonders of diversity and multiculturalism, but not enough instruction in the basic skills required for work or college. The need for reform of the public educational system is trumpeted by both parties at election time, while the fact of private education's superiority in every respect (except, perhaps, in sports programs and sex education) is tacitly acknowledged.

The idea behind the voucher plan is that the federal government should provide a voucher sufficient to fund an education for each school-age child. Parents could choose the school on which to expend the voucher. The school would then redeem the voucher for payment from the federal government. In other words, vouchers are an income-transfer program, as well as a subsidy to private industry, courtesy of the U.S. taxpayer.

It is not that vouchers are a bad idea *per se*. There are, in fact, many private voucher programs. Even in the case of a complete separation of school and state, vouchers would still be a viable alternative to the existing scheme for educational funding. Truth be told, however, all parents have "school choice" right now—just as they have a choice in cars, clothes, and food. What voucher proponents really mean when they complain of an absence of "school choice" is that parents do not have the opportunity of choosing where to spend other people's money for the education of their children.

Two recent books attempt to make the case for vouchers. John Merrifield's *School Choices: True and False* is a critique of current school-choice programs and proposals that emphasizes competition in education as the means to effect real reform. Clint Bolick's *Voucher Wars: Waging the Legal Battle Over School Choice* is an account of the 12-year legal battle that culminated in the Supreme Court's 2002 decision, *Zelman v. Simmons-Harris*, which upheld Cleveland's school-choice program. Although the two books are totally different in their approach to the subject of vouchers, they contain some of the same fallacies.

Merrifield, an economics professor at the University of Texas at San Antonio, is no neophyte on the subject of school choice. He has already written widely on the subject and is a frequent guest on television and radio programs where the issue is discussed and debated. Bolick, the author of several previous books on civil rights, is the vice president and national director of state chapters at the Institute for Justice. He also has the dubious distinction of having worked for the government at the Equal Employment Opportunity Center and in the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.

School Choices progresses from the current state of the public-school system to problems with current reform proposals to the author's policy proposals for a competitive education industry. Although the main focus of the book is on vouchers, Merrifield also addresses charter schools; tax credits; the politicization of public education; government inefficiency, bureaucracy, and regulation; educational systems in foreign countries; magnet schools; school districts; and teachers' unions. Merrifield treats both the identification and discussion of "the critical elements of a competitive education industry" and the failure of current voucher programs and proposals, which he attributes to the fact that "choice advocates have forsaken and endangered the only truly effective reform catalyst—competition—mostly unwittingly, but often intentionally."

Numerous myths have been perpetuated on both sides of the school-choice debate, and Merrifield exposes many of them. The independence of charter schools is, he claims, "largely an illusion," and the charter ideal of an autonomous public school is a "fantasy." Merrifield further points out that the system of nonrefundable tax credits, by which every dollar of private-school tu-

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ition paid reduces taxes by one dollar, would not help anyone. The rich can afford to send their children to whatever private school they wish regardless of any tax break they may receive, while the middle class and the poor, who pay little or no income tax, would not be helped by a tax credit at all. Voucher programs currently under way in Florida, Milwaukee, and Cleveland are the object of Merrifield's greatest attention and disdain—not because they are voucher programs, but because they limit participation to low-income parents and low-performing schools (with the state grading its own schools); do not allow for add-ons (supplements to the tax-funded voucher to make the higher-priced private schools affordable); and because they are simply too small to provide any meaningful results. Merrifield's solution to the school-reform problem is not an end to the public-school system, voucher programs, or federal control of education. Instead, he advocates publicly funded, universal, child-based vouchers. Merrifield again leaves it to the government to "determine the boundaries of its role as information provider and data generator, including standardized testing requirements and content."

Merrifield's proposals contain some major problems. First, if the state is to determine (as Merrifield thinks it should) what a school is, then a universal voucher is not a universal voucher at all. Parents who wish to send their children to "non-traditional" private schools that do not take orders from the state in respect of textbooks, teacher qualifications, hiring quotas, admissions, or curriculum requirements would not enjoy school choice. Second, as an economist, Merrifield should understand that his universal voucher program would distort the marketplace by establishing a floor below which tuition could not sink. No private school would have the incentive to compete on cost: Consequently, prices would be higher for everyone. Third, vouchers would foster increased dependency on the government. Parents would look to the state as the sole provider of educational funds for their children, as many parents now look to the state for food stamps, medical care, housing subsidies, and assorted welfare programs. Also, the state might very well embrace universal vouchers if it sees how they can be used to its advantage.

Voucher Wars is a firsthand account of Clint Bolick's experiences as a litigant on behalf of school-choice voucher programs. Bolick condemns public schools not only as defective, inadequate, and inferior but as hellholes. Although his solution to the problem is the voucher plan, he does not write in defense of vouchers *per se*, even though Bolick considers them a good thing that all libertarians should support. The concerns of libertarian critics of vouchers therefore receive short shrift in this book. Bolick argues that, "for those of us who consider ourselves libertarians, the school choice movement is a textbook example of effectively reducing the scope and power of government"—a statement with which many prominent libertarians would disagree. Bolick holds up the Milwaukee voucher program as "a model for the nation," but this program has been severely criticized by other voucher supporters, including John Merrifield.

The bad guys in the fight against vouchers are always the teachers' unions, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the NAACP and its Legal Defense Fund, People for the American Way, the ACLU, and "special interest groups." Therefore, to be opposed to vouchers is to be identified with these groups in the eyes of Clint Bolick, who holds both "absolutist" libertarians and

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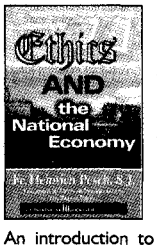

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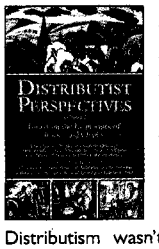

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teachers' unions responsible for keeping children in government schools. Like Merrifield, Bolick uses the language of the free market to commend the voucher plan: *consumers, competition, deregulate, parental liberty, the market, choice, educational marketplace, freedom.* Vouchers, however, are not about educational freedom: They are a program to transfer income from "the rich" to "the poor" reminiscent of Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society. "The rich" who send their children to private schools must pay tuition *and* taxes to fund public schools; "the poor," on the other hand, who do not pay taxes to fund public schools to begin with, may now receive a voucher for private education courtesy of "the rich." Bolick claims that "it is nothing less than criminal to fail to consider private options in a rescue mission" for children in failing public schools. Is it any less criminal, however, to compel a citizen to pay for the education of someone else's children? As a lawyer, Bolick can be forgiven his claim that "litigation could in fact change the world"; as a professed libertarian, he should know better.

Clearly, Bolick and Merrifield are intellectually indebted to economist Milton Friedman. John Merrifield admits that "the modern voucher debate began with Milton Friedman's 1955 proposal that was first read widely in the context of Chapter Six of his 1962 book *Capitalism and Freedom*," in which Friedman suggested that "governments could require a minimum level of schooling financed by giving parents vouchers redeemable for a specified maximum sum per child per year if spent on 'approved' educational services." Friedman expanded on this proposal in his later book *Free to Choose*. And Bolick, who "idolizes" Friedman, considers him and his wife "the godparents" of the school-choice movement. Although Friedman is widely respected as a free-market economist, his statist ideas gave us the withholding-tax system and the Earned Income Tax Credit. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Friedman should be behind the redistributionist voucher scheme.

Voucher proponents, although they may lament the decline of education in America, completely miss the point. There are two fundamental problems with vouchers.

First, far from improving American education, vouchers would make it worse. Not only would the voucher system create an additional layer of government bureaucracy financed by taxes, inflation, or borrowing, it would allow the state to take complete control of those private schools that accepted voucher payments through regulation, hiring quotas, teacher certification, curriculum requirements, *etc.* I find it incredible that Merrifield can state:

> I am not convinced that a refundable tax credit or fully funded voucher risks any more regulation of the private sector than exists now or will exist in the near future. But even if the risk were greater than with other approaches, the potential benefits of system transformation are worth it.

It is inconceivable that the government (federal or state) would ever provide money to parents or schools without attaching strings to its largesse. Federal control of private schools would have the same disastrous results that federal control of airport security has had.

Second, vouchers would be financed by tax dollars, as public education presently is. To make matters worse, voucher funding would come from "fresh money." No current voucher proposal even hints at a reduction in funding for public schools to pay for vouchers. Under Merrifield's proposals, education would be publicly funded even in the absence of a public-school system. If all the money currently spent on education were instead given to parents in the form of vouchers to expend at any school they wished, then the public schools could and should be abolished. And even if they were not abolished immediately, the mass exodus of students would certainly cause them to decline still further. The federal government, however, would never allow the wholesale dismantling of the public-school system—the greatest tool it has to foster its agenda of egalitarianism, collectivism, and political correctness. And, if the system were abolished, or even rendered irrelevant, what would be the point in collecting tax money from all citizens and redistributing it to those who have school-age children?

School Choices: True and False should cause libertarians and conservatives who favor current voucher programs and proposals to rethink their position. Critics of vouchers, whatever their political or economic persuasion, will find in this slender volume much useful information and also insightful analysis of the problems associated with current voucher programs in Florida, Milwaukee, and Cleveland, as well as of the myriad calls for reform and the proposed solutions to the crisis in public education. And *Voucher Wars* is your book if you are looking for a comprehensive legal history of the school-voucher movement. If, however, you were expecting a philosophical defense of school vouchers, this account of a libertarian lawyer's 12-year crusade in behalf of yet another government program will leave you sorely disappointed.

Laurence M. Vance is an instructor at the Pensacola Bible Institute and a freelance writer.

Cakewalk Through the Sand Dunes

by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

An End to Evil: How to Win the War on Terror
by David Frum and Richard Perle
New York: Random House;
284 pp., $25.95

◆

This malignant little book, admirably successful in achieving the difficult feat of combining vapidity with nastiness, further exhibits dishonesty, hypocrisy, flattery, cant, and special pleading, in about equal parts. To this list of sins, we can finally add error—of the grossest magnitude. *An End to Evil*, though published just a few months ago, is not just hopelessly outdated, it is wholly vitiated by subsequent events "on the ground," in Officialspeak. Really, there is something unsporting about reviewing this crippled book from the present historical vantage point. Fortunately, this hunt does not entail a long chase.

David Frum, the former White House speechwriter of "Axis of Evil" fame, and Richard "Cakewalk" Perle, he of the Department of Defense (more or less), describe their book as a "manual for victory" in the "War on Terror," which, for them, is almost infinitely more dreadful than the French, Russian, and Maoist Revolutions combined.

> For us, terrorism remains the great evil of our time, and the war

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against this evil, our generation's great cause. We do not believe that Americans are fighting this evil to minimize it or to manage it. We believe they are fighting to win—to end this evil before it kills again and on a genocidal scale. There is no middle way for Americans: It is victory or holocaust.

Frum and Perle are far too complimentary of their fellow Americans, who, of course, are not "fighting" anything but rather peaceably mall-trotting, watching television, and buying abortions in the peaceful security of their continental fastness. On the other hand, a people that is being asked to commit its country to World War IV, reconfigure the Middle East, and make over as many other countries as the Defense Policy Board might designate may well need a little bucking up—especially when they have nothing to gain and everything to lose in the process. "We must hunt down the individual terrorists before they kill our people or others. . . . We must deter all regimes that use terror as a weapon of state against anyone, American or not."

For the authors, the war against Al Qaeda necessarily entails war against North Korea, Syria, Iran, and even Saudi Arabia—Chris Matthews' "Fireman's War" for hegemonic revenge. The dragnet is also to enmesh Hamas and Hezbollah, though Hamas has never attacked the United States. Perle-Frum's agenda is clearly not America's but someone else's, though that Someone Else is treated throughout the book as a rather remote bystander, bemused by the geopolitical currents swirling about it, and almost wholly preoccupied by the continuing Palestinian unpleasantness. "The Arab-Israeli quarrel," Frumperle insist, "is not a *cause* of Islamic extremism." If you can believe that, you will also agree with the authors that the second Iraq War was in no way the work of a neoconservative "cabal" operating from the Department of Defense and the office of the Vice President of the United States. Elsewhere, Perlefrum write:

> It's not always in our power to do something about such criminals [as the Ayatollah Khamenei], nor is it always in our interest, but when it is in our power and interest, we should toss dictators aside with no more compunction than a police sharpshooter feels when he downs a hostage-taker.

Is anyone acquainted with people who think that way *except* neoconservatives?

Neither David Frum nor Richard Perle (who insisted before hostilities commenced that war in Iraq would be a "cakewalk") has been much heard from of late. That is not to say that they have not prepared in advance an answer to critics churlish enough to throw up to them the wild inaccuracy of their pre-war predictions of easeful victory. "Of all our mistakes," they write,

> probably the most serious was our unwillingness to allow the Iraqi National Congress, Iraq's leading anti-Saddam resistance movement, to form a provisional government after the fall of Baghdad. In 1944, we took care to let French troops enter Paris before U.S. or British forces. We should have shown equal tact in 2003.

They mean Iraq would be pacified today and preparing to take up the reins of democratic government if only George Bush had handed the country over to Ahmed Chalabi, one of the biggest crooks and con men in the Middle East and Washington, who has recently been accused of helping to precipitate the war in Iraq by duping the White House into deposing Saddam Hussein, the mortal enemy of his Iranian clients in Tehran, by feeding it and the Defense Department disinformation concerning Saddam's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction. The tragedy, and the horror, of the United States today is the near-total ignorance of its leaders and the advisors to those leaders—ignorance not only of history but of the most elemental facts of human nature.

What sort of political and intellectual hacks would write a "manual" purporting to set forward a strategy to defeat evil—the second most powerful metaphysical force in the universe—now and for all time? *An End to Evil* is not a book about international politics, nor is it a book about reality in any form or at any level. It is, rather, a work of intellectual and moral fantasy, inspired by moral presumption and power-hunger, at whose center, like a large, dark spider, lies the Interest whose name the authors dare not speak. The fantastical quality is the direct result of their need to defend, in rational terms, an insane policy that can be defended only in irrational terms so long as its advocates are unwilling to declare their *parti pris*. Only in that circumstance could it make any possible sense at all.

Chilton Williamson, Jr., is Chronicles' *senior editor for books.*

LIBERAL ARTS

BUT THEY WILL DEPORT A PIT BULL

"A suburban pit bull that killed a neighbor's two small dogs will not be euthanized, but will find a new home in Mexico under a deal worked out today between the animal's owner and Hoffman Estates officials.

"The village wanted to put to sleep Ramses, a 5-year-old pit bull, after it fatally mauled two Maltese last month. In a bid to save the canine's life, Ramses' owner found a cousin who lives on a farm near Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to take the dog.

"'Victor Sandoval is willing to do whatever it takes to save this dog's life,' said the man's attorney, William Raines. . . .

"The man plans to bundle the dog into his car and set off for Mexico Saturday, Raines said. Sandoval must return to court June 29 to prove he has deported Ramses.

"Sandoval also agreed to pay $200 in fines stemming from the May 5 attack. He had been cited for allegedly not having a rabies tag or a license for his dog and for letting it run at large. . . .

"Today's deal did not please Josephine Zylkowski, owner of the fluffy white Maltese dogs killed in the May 5 attack.

"'It's nuts,' the 71-year-old Hoffman Estates woman said. 'How do we know it's in Mexico?'"

—from "Pit bull escapes death, will go to Mexico," by Rachel Osterman, the Chicago Tribune *(June 9)*

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Letter From Moscow

by Curtis Cate

Gigantic Weaknesses

◆

One of the sights that most amazed me as I approached the center of Moscow for the first time was a huge poster, stretched across the flat rooftop of a large building not far from the Kremlin, boldly advertising PHILIPS in large letters that needed no further explanation. Not to be outdone by the famous electronics manufacturer, an enterprising Dutch firm, farther up the Moscow riverside, reminded beer-drinkers that HEINEKEN was the best antidote to thirst. Another prominently placed poster proclaimed the excellence of BERLONI—hitherto unknown to me, but apparently a major designer of Italian kitchens—and then, in even larger and longer letters, came that electronic powerhouse, PANASONIC. Beyond doubt, however, the boldest and the least inhibited of these commercial exhibitionists was SAMSUNG, with a poster so gigantic that it almost dwarfed the Kremlin's nearby *Troitskaya bashnya*, its Trinity Tower. A poster, furthermore, which, more than any other, can be regarded as a mocking symbol of the crushing triumph of capitalism over communism, since it straddles the long flat rooftop of the "*Leninka*"—the Muscovites' ironic nickname for the large Lenin Library that was erected long ago to honor the memory of the 20th century's most prolific and earthshaking political pamphleteer.

Am I naive in daring to express such a sense of bewilderment? Possibly. I find it hard to imagine, however, that the French government and the Paris city hall would allow huge posters of this kind to be erected along the banks of the Seine, and indeed almost within a good vodka bottle's throw of the Elysée Palace; any more than I can imagine the British government allowing similar posters to crown one or two of the stately edifices of Westminster or Whitehall along the Thames embankment, or the Bush administration and Congress tolerating such intrusive advertising in the vicinity of the White House.

Far be it for me to suggest that the present government in Moscow—that of Vladimir Putin—should take an even tougher line than the one it is already taking with its self-serving "oligarchs," in a move to mitigate the capitalistic desecration of the Moskva riverfront. But what these clamorous posters really symbolize is less the flagrant triumph of "free enterprise" in post-Gorbachov-and-Yeltsin Russia than the enduring weakness of a shaky regime, unwilling to defend the architectural integrity of its ancient capital center for fear of being accused of harboring "retrograde," neocommunistic inclinations.

Next to those huge posters, nothing in Moscow, I think, more graphically illustrates the hidden weaknesses of the young Russian Federation than certain products of the architectural gigantomania that was, for a long time, the pride and hallmark of Soviet-Stalinist modernity. I am not referring to the steepled skyscraper, housing a number of the University of Moscow's faculties, which rises like a lighthouse of learning over Moscow's western horizon; nor even, near one end of the pedestrian Arbat, to the upward-thrusting, stalagmitic monster—a real masterpiece of "Soviet-Gothic" architechtonics—which still houses the bureaucrats of Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

No, I am referring to the mastodons of hotelization that were erected, not only in Stalin's time but later, as concrete symbols of "Soviet might."

One of the ugliest of these touristic dinosaurs is the once-prestigious Moskva, which was built in the 1930's as a posh hotel, almost exclusively reserved for party apparatchiks. It was designed by two architects, each armed with a different plan, both of which Stalin absentmindedly approved and countersigned—with the odd result that it is an almost bicephalous curiosity, with two quite differently designed façades emanating from a somewhat disjointed body. Now shunned by foreign businessmen and others, who prefer to meet their Russian counterparts in one of several far-smaller but more-alluring Marriott hotels, the Moskva will likely disappear as an unwanted relic of the Soviet past.

Far more difficult to demolish—for reasons of sheer size—is the greatest of these architectural behemoths, a gigantic block of concrete, 250 yards long by as many wide, which Khrushchev and Bulganin had the bad taste, in the mid-1960's, to plant on the hill that slopes downward from the redbrick walls of the Kremlin toward the Moskva River. The largest hotel in all of Russia, and possibly of the world, it contains (according to the *Moscow Encyclopedia*) 5,374 beds (in Russian, *myesta*, meaning "places")—with 12 long stories in the main hotel block and 11 shorter floors above it in a squat square tower, which offer even more spectacular panoramic vistas, toward or away from the Kremlin.

Curious to see how the present overlords of Moscow were trying to maintain such an oversized monstrosity, I decided to treat this concrete leviathan to a personal inspection.

I found the ground-floor lobby almost empty of clients, with flustered hostesses who were embarrassed when I asked them for a hotel folder indicating current prices for bedrooms, *etc.* (They had to write the information on a slip of paper.) Wishing to enjoy what I had every reason to believe was a spectacular view over the Moskva riverside, I took an elevator to the 12th floor and walked past an interminable series of closed doors, without a client or even a maid to disturb me. (In Soviet times, I would, of course, have been greeted, first of all, by the usually female watchdog guarding each floor.) Finally, I found the restaurant-café. It, too, was empty. Apparently nobody in this gigantic hotel, or from elsewhere outside, was at all interested in enjoying the view—which was truly spectacular. If I was surprised to find such a well-located restaurant-café empty, however, even more so were the two girls behind the bar to see a couple of clients unexpectedly appear. My request for a Cinzano was met with a puzzled look, and, in the end, I had to walk over to the bar and point to the bottle.

If the huge posters that presently grace (or perhaps disgrace) the Moskva riverfront are in reality signs of weakness rather than of robust economic strength, so, paradoxically, were the statistics published in early May of this year by *Forbes* which revealed the astounding fact that Moscow presently holds the record as the city with the highest concentration of billionaires

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in the world, with 36 duly registered.

The reason why this statistic is a sign of weakness rather than of broad-based economic strength was revealed in the same *Forbes* article, where it was pointed out that two thirds of these fortunes had been made in the field of petroleum, natural gas, and metallurgy; and that, whereas in the United States an estimated 227 billionaires account for only six percent of the GDP, Russia's 36 billionaires account for almost one quarter—24 percent—of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. One of these Russian fortunes, interestingly enough, had been amassed by Yelena Baturina, the enterprising manager of a huge construction consortium named Inteko, who happens to be the wife of Moscow's equally dynamic and forceful mayor, Yuri Luzhkov.

The basically unfavorable disparity became even more glaringly apparent when one descended below the billion-dollar mark to the category of those who are merely multimillionaires—for here the *Forbes* investigators could find only 64 Russians who could boast of possessing fortunes exceeding $200 million—figures immediately contested by some of these embarrassed (because tax-dodging) plutocrats and by the Moscow newspaper, *Vyedomosti*, which likes to regard itself as the *Wall Street Journal* of Russia.

Significantly, not a single billionaire was a resident of another major Russian city. This, too, is a somber sign for the future. Anyone who has traveled extensively in Russia has been able to see for himself the extent to which this vast hinterland is, compared to Moscow, an underdeveloped and often neglected desert. Whereas Moscow, like a monstrously overgrown heart, continues to attract and to pump in about one million new inhabitants a year, other cities are dramatically declining. In May of last year, a Swedish social worker, who was trying to enlist local help on behalf of homeless street urchins in Saint Petersburg, showed me a printed pamphlet, based on official statistics, that predicted that Russia's second-largest city would, at the present rate of attrition, have been reduced from a population total of around four million today to two million in 2009.

It was because he shrewdly realized that, to be truly popular in Russia, he needed to espouse the cause of the tens of millions of impoverished Russians who continue to live at levels of bare subsistence (or even lower) that Vladimir Putin last year condoned, if he did not actually order, the melodramatic arrest and incarceration, on tax-evasion and other charges, of the country's wealthiest billionaire, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, and of his chief financier, Platon Lebedev, who, in little more than a dozen years, had transformed the Yukos oil company into Russia's foremost petroleum conglomerate. It is no exaggeration to say that this readiness to clip the wings of some of the country's most extravagantly wealthy plutocrats did more than anything else to ensure Putin's landslide victory in the presidential election of last March.

The price that Russia—and, more specifically, the Moscow intelligentsia—have had to pay for the new political and economic "order" that Vladimir Putin and his closest collaborators (quite a few of them former agents, like himself, of the Soviet KGB) have been imposing on the country is a definite curtailment of the uninhibited "free speech" that reigned during the heady, chaotic days of Putin's predecessor, the easygoing Boris Yeltsin. The essence of this new policy is the realistic belief that, to control Russia during the critical transition period lying immediately ahead, the Kremlin must control the major TV channels—which have a nationwide audience—while allowing Moscow newspapers (whose readership and political influence are limited) the right to indulge in "constructive" and "responsible" criticism.

The crackdown was launched by Putin not long after his first election to the presidency in March 2000, with the liquidation of an hilarious TV puppet show ("*Kookly*"), which had been mercilessly mocking Russian bigwigs, brilliantly inspired and scripted by Russia's wittiest journalist, Victor Shenderovich. The two major stars had been, inevitably, Boris Yeltsin, who was not overly upset by the comic antics of his marionetting *alter ego*, and his successor, the tight-lipped Vladimir Putin, who was not at all amused.

Because its owner had dared to support Boris Yeltsin's candidacy for a second presidential term, and because of the scathing criticism to which Putin himself was subjected for his initial nonchalance in the dramatic sinking of the *Kursk* submarine, the NTV television channel was closed down, and the "media magnate" Vladimir Gusinsky was thrown into prison, charged with embezzlement and "illegal privatization of State property," and finally forced into exile.

Forcibly expelled from the TV screen, Shenderovich staged an astonishing comeback as a caustic commentator on daily events for another—the TVS—television station, in a program humorously entitled *Besplatny syr* ("Free Cheese"). By the late spring of last year, this program—pointedly devoted to "the leaders whom we have elected"—had won an unprecedented popularity, with more than eight million viewers every Saturday evening. When the Putin ax finally fell and TVS was forcibly closed down in late June 2003, it was on the absurd charge that the TV station was insolvent and about to go bankrupt.

Interviewed by a *Figaro* correspondent, Shenderovich robustly declared:

> If you strip somebody and lay him out naked in the cold, with trussed-up hands and feet, you can say, true enough, that he died of a pneumonia infection. But he will none the less have been the victim of an assassination.

He added: "TVS was not liquidated for financial reasons, as the Powers that Be assert, but for having laid claim to the status of an opposition TV network, in a country where this is no longer possible."

(Ingenious and, for the time being, indomitably popular, Shenderovich has since been offered a major weekly slot with Radio Echo Moskvy—now generally regarded by intelligent Muscovites as the most outspoken, free-debating, politically, economically, and culturally active radio station in Russia—with a program sarcastically entitled *Plavlenny syrok*, a tiny dash of processed cheese.)

The success or failure of Vladimir Putin's announced plan to double Russia's GDP within the next ten years—the present rate of growth is eight percent—may well depend on his ability to reduce, if not to eliminate (probably impossible), the extraordinary level of corruption that still exists at virtually all levels of Russian administration. An important first step in this direction was taken by the Kremlin, even before Putin's reelection, when the salaries of policemen—which up till then had averaged a dismal 3,500 rubles ($100) per month—were significantly increased, thus providing them at last with an incentive to be relatively honest maintainers of public order rather than uniformed bandits obliged to resort to bribes, threats, and extortions in order to supplement their meager incomes.

I happened to be in Moscow in mid-

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June of last year when the minister of the interior, Boris Gryzlov, acting in consort with high-ranking officials from the Prosecutor General's Office, the Interior Ministry's own "security" department, and the FSB (the post-Soviet "Federal Security Service," which, with relatively few changes of personnel, has replaced the once-notorious KGB of Yuri Andropov and others), staged raids on no fewer than 40 offices, apartments, suburban *dachas*, and banks owned, occupied, or frequented by officers of Moscow's Criminal Police and the so-called Ministry for Extraordinary Situations, which Boris Yeltsin had established to aid persons in distress and the victims of natural catastrophes. The astonishing thing about these raids was less the lackluster results—the arrests of six Criminal Police officers and of a lieutenant general of the MChS—than the carefully planned publicity accorded to the event by the Ministry of the Interior, which, for once, tipped off selected journalists in advance. As the newspaper *Kommersant* commented in an ironic headline: "The internal affairs [the ministry's official Russian title is "Ministry of Internal Affairs"] have come out into the open."

That the raids were above all an elaborate publicity stunt was obvious from the start. The authorities, a Muscovite explained to me, "had to enlist the cooperation of the press to try to persuade the public that they are really serious in their determination to clean up the police forces in this country." A few weeks before in St. Petersburg, strenuous efforts had been needed to maintain an "exemplary" semblance of order during the tercentennial "summit" celebrations organized in late May by the city's most famous "son," Vladimir Putin. Thousands of *byesprizorny* (vagrant and homeless) street urchins were accordingly rounded up in advance and quietly transported to a small tent colony some distance beyond the city limits. In effect, it was a concentration camp for juvenile delinquents. In addition—to the intense annoyance of offended Petersburgers, outraged to be regarded as incapable of handling their own security affairs—thousands of officers and agents from Moscow's Criminal Police were dispatched to the former imperial capital to impose a draconian "order" on a virtually fenced-in city.

The truly Gogolian magnitude of what is, in effect, an exceedingly complex politico-juridical and security problem was dramatically illustrated in July of last year when Moscow's prosecutor, Mikhail Avdyukov, was "kicked upstairs" to join the staff of the Russian Federation's prosecutor general, Vladimir Ustinov, on the grounds that the Moscow office had covered up or fabricated evidence in no fewer than 9,000 cases, including 43 murders!

In the long run, the success or failure of Vladimir Putin's economic policies is likely to depend on his ability to instill a spirit of what is now being called "patriotic capitalism" into businessmen unscrupulously interested in enriching themselves by the many methods available. It will continue to be impossible for the Russian state to build up properly paid police and military forces if well-to-do citizens, particularly businessmen, go on finding subtle ways of not paying the taxes the federal government needs to fund such essential services. As Georgi Satarov, probably Russia's foremost specialist in matters of administrative graft, has pointed out, the amount that ordinary citizens pay out annually in bribes—about $3 billion—is roughly half of what they pay in income taxes, while the sums that astute businessmen pay out in bribes to keep their enterprises running smoothly (about $33 billion) was, in the year 2002, almost half of what the federal government was able to collect in revenues.

Is it surprising that a politician who has to grapple with such monumental problems should occasionally lose his calm? What has amazed many Russians and often made his jittery interpreters tremble in their polished shoes, however, has been the crude vulgarity, a kind of mixed jailbird and army-barracks slang, that Vladimir Putin has occasionally employed when harassed by journalists about the most intractable, the most insoluble, the most nightmarish of his problems: the present and future of the Caucasian province of Chechnya. Four years ago, in Moscow, he lost his temper, called the Chechen rebels "bandits," and declared: "We'll kill them all in the toilets!" Later, during a press conference in Brussels, at the end of a meeting with leaders of the European Union, he lashed out at a correspondent from *Le Monde* who had dared to ask him why so many innocent civilians were being killed in Chechnya: "Come on over and have a look, and we'll arrange to have you all circumcised!" In July of last year, after a Moscow pop concert had been unexpectedly rocked into bloody chaos and confusion by Chechen suicide bombers, Putin declared that he and his men would dig out such vermin "from their cracked and fissured cellars, and exterminate them."

Even George W. Bush, in announcing (like Putin) that his forces would weed out the terrorists from every one of "their dark nooks and crannies," never went quite that far. Not yet, at any rate.

Curtis Cate is the author of four biographies, the first of which, devoted to the French aviator-author, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, was recently published in Moscow in an unauthorized Russian translation.

Letter to the Bishop

by Joe Ecclesia

The Fornicators' Mass

◆

Your Excellency:

Recently, I read in our diocesan newspaper of the "gay and lesbian Mass" offered at St. Peter's Church in Charlotte. According to the article, this Mass was a means of comforting those who have been ostracized by the Church and of ensuring a welcome for homosexuals that would incorporate Church teachings and pastoral concerns. Although I am not sure what this latter statement means, I assume that this is the place where someone in authority mentions that heavy breathing and entwined limbs outside of marriage and professional wrestling matches are big no-nos.

Although I must confess that I found it necessary to conceal the large front-page headline from the eyes of my 12-year-old—my son is still rather revolted by this idea of sex between men, though I am certain, with the assistance of the Church, government, and educational system, he'll come round one of these days—I read the article with avid interest. How wonderful that we have become such an inclusive Church, adding sodomites to the adulterers, thieves, and other sinners who weekly attend Mass and enjoy the Sacraments—excepting Confession, of course—in our *novus ordo seclorum*.

Msgr. Richard Allen, who received a standing ovation for his homily, called gays and lesbians "heroes." His remarks made me wonder if I had taken the right

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path by marrying and raising a family. Should I have tried walking on the other side of the street, so to speak, so that I might also be a hero? That evening long ago in Boston's Combat Zone, when I refused the advances of that poor skinny fellow with the blond beard and damp lips: Was it then that my life took a wrong turn, costing me my opportunity to rise to the heights of heroism? Possibly, yet I just cannot seem to raise an interest in that direction. It's a question of defective genes on my part, no doubt, but what's a poor fellow to do?

But this is all by-the-by, Your Excellency. My purpose in this letter is to ask you to consider offering a diocesan-wide Fornicators' Mass. Several people in our parish are "living in sin"—how splendidly quaint that sounds!—and I am certain that it takes great courage for them to do so. It seems to me that they, too, deserve recognition as heroes. Having their own special Mass would surely help these people feel less ostracized and more a part of the Church. Since other parishes from around the diocese must also have adulterers and fornicators participating in the Mass and partaking of the Eucharist, I feel certain that this service would be well attended.

Such a Mass might provide a place for reconciliation and for wide recognition of heroism in today's Church. In the case of adultery, for example, we might invite both the injured spouse and the lover as well as any children involved on either side. This way, everyone could stand up and be courageous together. We could also explain, as the diocesan news article mentioned, that the justifications for these relationships, just like those of our homosexual brothers and sisters, are based on the insights of current human sciences—meaning, I suppose, those Masters, Johnson, and Kinsey "sciences" which teach us that humans are intended to hop onto one other with the frequency of rabbits.

During the Mass, we could release balloons bearing love lines from the Song of Solomon. To create a proper mood, we might also consider blending a few songs from the 60's—"Let's Spend the Night Together," "Help Me Make It Through the Night," and so on—into the Mass. Most of my fellow Catholics (who are, as you know, docile as sheep in regard to Church music) would sing lustily (and lustfully) along with these songs. (Perhaps we could even sing "Domenique." Your Excellency surely remembers Sr. Luc-Gabrielle, the "singing nun" who made that little ditty a hit tune in the late 60's. Sister left the convent, declared herself a lesbian, and, in 1985, ended up a suicide by barbiturates. Was she also a hero?)

We would need banners, of course; I was thinking that we could find some adorned with Valentine's Day hearts. Indeed, perhaps the feast day of Saint Valentine would be the ideal day for the Fornicators' Mass. We might also consider issuing a pendant bearing a scarlet "A" to participants, thereby transforming what once was a mark of shame into a badge of honor.

Somewhere in the homily, the priest might be inspired, as apparently the priests who address our homosexual brothers and sisters are, to tell his listeners that all the baptized have the right to the Church and Her Sacraments and that the Church has an obligation to welcome them with joy and thanksgiving for their many talents. No one need bring up the old idea of sin; the very mention of *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa* would put a damper on the whole liturgy, which is why our gay homosexuals never bring up the subject. (Here I am using *gay* in its antiquated and adjectival sense, Your Excellency, to mean happy or celebratory.)

Such a Mass, particularly if we keep the music lively and the homily upbeat, will undoubtedly prove popular and may even lead to the establishment of other theme Masses. As a former swiller of anything alcoholic—I did draw the line at aftershave lotion—I can tell you with some authority that there would be great interest in a Drunkards' Mass. Unlike homosexuals, alcoholics are only heroic after they have abandoned their vice; but I'm sure we can slip this difference past everyone without causing a ruckus. The diocese could offer a Thieves' Mass for certain local businessmen, a Gossips' Mass for almost everyone, and a Millstone Around the Neck Mass for some of our Faith Formation teachers. In the latter Mass, let me suggest that you go out of your way to reassure our teachers that Christ's admonition to those who deceive or mislead the young—that it would be better if they were thrown into the sea with a stone about their necks—was just another example of His offbeat humor.)

I invite you to consider these proposals, Your Excellency. Keeping you in my prayers,

Joe Ecclesia

Letter From Mexico

by V. Groginsky

Portrait of a Failed Society

◆

To paraphrase one observer of Albanians, "Mexico is not a society with corruption; Mexico *is* a corrupt society." Mexico has been undergoing a social crisis since the end of the Partido Revolutionario Institucional's 71-year monopoly on political power. Gone is the state's patronage of competing interests, populism that succeeded by co-opting all opponents. The coffers have run dry, and a culture that has long been raised to take, not make—to steal, not deal—is finding itself ill adapted to the modern world.

Recently, Mexican news editorials cried "racism!" lambasting Californians for daring to elect a governor who protects their interests. "*Mexicans built that country*," claimed one commentator on a leading nightly news program. "We fed your cattle, harvested your crops, washed your dishes. *You owe your wealth to us.*"

He failed to mention the illegal immigrants who have bankrupted California's social services, the jobs they have taken away from Americans, the billions of dollars repatriated annually to Mexico, and the extensive crime inflicted on Americans.

The Mexican nation suffers a pathological contradiction in self-perception, a reverse Napoleonic complex of sorts. They perceive themselves as grander than the statistics tell—in culture, geostrategic position, and socioeconomic and infrastructure development. This overinflated self-image masks an inferiority complex, used to justify noncompliance with internationally accepted norms of behavior or contractual obligations. Mexicans claim exemption from conventional obligations and standards: "Hey, this isn't the United States: *This is Mexico*. If you don't like how we do things here, *go home*." Too often wont to fault their successful international competitors, Mexican have a willful lack of innovation and integrity that lies at the root of the failures they attribute to others.

Globalism has forced Mexican society to confront its inadequacies, which has helped undermine traditional Mexican values and customs. One Mexican psychiatrist opined that "this has caused

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a generalized social neurosis," which has exacerbated social tensions, manifested in common displays of aggression. Accelerating to prevent someone from entering highway traffic is now the norm. "*Mi casa es tu casa*" is a home in disorder.

Perhaps the roots of such abject mediocrity and apathy lie in Mexico's history of Spanish conquest. But is an historical claim to victimhood really a legitimate excuse for today's failures? When victimhood becomes identity, indifference becomes accepted. Until Mexicans throw off their psychological shackles and change their culture rather than their figurehead, national impoverishment will remain their burden.

Mexicans "waste 100 times more energy finding excuses than getting the job done" (as Milko Manchevski opined of his native Macedonia). When the line that separates criminal and civil society is absent, however, social life is not possible.

Transparency International notes that Mexicans distrust the police and security forces more than they do any other institution, and the reasons are not ambiguous. A U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices notes: "Corruption is widespread within police ranks and a growing problem for the military. Military personnel and police officers [continue] to commit serious human rights abuses." Robert S. Leiken, commenting in *Mexico: The Crisis Next Door* on the reasons for public-private criminal collusion, sees a resolution to the dilemma as improbable:

> [T]o get a police job . . . one has to bribe one's way in . . . an officer can usually gain not only a steady income from graft, but also immunity for past and future crimes . . . Officers do occasionally get discharged for malfeasance . . . [but] work can usually be found in another jurisdiction or . . . in innumerable separate police forces . . . [O]ne can always turn to the criminal domain. Ties already forged with the underworld, and with other working officers, plus knowledge of criminal procedures, make fine felons of cashiered police.

As to why mass firings are not feasible, Leiken quoted one official's response "[That would only] put an uncontrolled army of criminals on the street."

Russell Gordon

The Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas Highlands speak their own language, and many do not speak Spanish.

"[M]exico," Leiken writes, "is a democracy without the rule of law." The state of Morelos is one of the worst examples of official criminality in the country. Former President Ernesto Zedillo personally intervened in May 1998, stating at a lunch with society figures:

> We know the task is nothing simple, because, regrettably, Morelos has become known for extremely grave problems, starting with problems of insecurity and injustice. There cannot be economic progress or social growth if we cannot count on a clear State of Law. And, unfortunately, that hasn't happened here in the State of Morelos.

Zedillo added that, "Sadly, Morelos has become—and we know that now—the base for narcotraffickers. Morelos has become—as sadly and painfully we know now—the base for kidnapping gangs and [violent] assailants."

Zedillo was under enormous pressure from international human-rights organizations and governments to resolve the issue of an officially sponsored kidnapping ring, run by former Morelos police officer Daniel Arizmendi Lopez and involving the police anti-kidnapping unit with the collusion of the Treasury Department, judges, State Justice Police, Judicial Police, local bankers and businessmen, and lawyers, all under the protection of Gov. Jorge Carillo Olea. Arizmendi's tactics included progressively amputating his hostage's body parts, until ransom was paid or the victim was tortured to death.

U.S. Military Intelligence at Fort Bragg reported that the Morelos State Prosecutor's Office admitted that "Morelos is the *land of kidnapping*" and that 80 percent of the crimes in the state remain unpunished. Arizmendi was finally captured and sent to prison as the "sacrificial lamb" for his part in the crimes, yet most police and public officials involved remain free, some still in their official positions.

The kidnapping spate of the late 1990's has slowed considerably, yet Morelos remains a central hub for narcotraffickers. In an August 8, 2003 article in *Reforma*, Gov. Sergio Estrada denied that local police are protecting narcotraffickers—despite testimony from an imprisoned police officer. Estrada stated that the Attorney General's Police are the ones responsible for investigating links between officials and criminals "*[and] it's just unproven speculations*." For a fare, taxi drivers take visitors to see the opulent homes of known narcotraffickers, who remain at liberty. Small wonder that half of the world's drug cartels are Mexican.

A U.S. military-intelligence report entitled "Challenges to Security Forces in the Third Millennium" states that "Mexico [is ranked] the third most violent country in the world in terms of homicides per capita. Mexico's homicide rate is three times that of the U.S." In what has been called "Mexico's national disgrace," approximately 500 young women have been brutally raped, tortured, and murdered in the frontier town of Ciudad Juarez over the past ten years. Their remains have usually been dumped in the desert, their bodies cut open, organs removed, and their hollow abdominal cav-

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Russell Gordon

Prostitutes in Mexico City charge around 80 pesos ($7). Many of their customers are married men who return home to infect their wives and unborn children with HIV.

ity filled with trash or sand. Amnesty International notes:

> Many of the women were abducted, held captive for several days and subjected to humiliation, torture and the most horrific sexual violence before dying, most as a result of asphyxiation caused by strangulation or from being beaten.

The sighting of men in 4x4's kidnapping girls and women in poor neighborhoods, and the grisly dumping of mutilated bodies (some times as many as eight together), has elicited no substantive response from local, state, or federal authorities. The administration of Vicente Fox Quesada has appointed special representatives, while going to great lengths to blame state and local authorities in Chihuahua. Anticorruption state's attorney Carlos Castresana has described the impunity and lack of political will to resolve the crimes as an "institutional collapse and a failure of the integrity of the Mexican justice system."

Theories abound in Mexico regarding the perpetrators of these serial killings, from extraterrestrials to satanic cults to organ traffickers to powerful and well-connected men holding orgies. Many of the victims have come from shantytowns that, according to one report (*El Universal*, "Tracking bones of the Dead in Juarez," August 4, 2003) are built on land owned by the wealthiest families in Ciudad Juarez: Pedro Zaragoza Fuentes, Alfredo Urias, Oscar Cantu, and the Lugo family.

Of course, Mexicans could never accept that their society is sufficiently dysfunctional to spawn such barbarities, *so the culprits must be from El Norte.* The Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR) opened a new line of investigation into the killings, implicating American soldiers, who allegedly cross the border to hunt humans. Yet Attorney General Rafael Macedo and Deputy Attorney General Carlos Vega have offered no evidence to back up the allegations. As a footnote, they added that the PGR continues to examine the theory that the attackers *could* be from the Mexican side.

A U.N. report on the Juarez killings (The Situation of the Rights of Women in Ciudad Juarez, 2002) noted that

> some of the officials responsible for investigation and prosecution began employing a discourse that in effect blamed the victim for the crime . . . the response of the relevant officials to the victims' family members ranged from indifference to hostility.

(Other media quoted Chihuahua Attorney General Arturo Gonzalez Rascon as the source of this policy.) The macho culture of Northern Mexicans, many of whom resent the financial independence women have acquired through *maquiladora* employment, has been cited as one factor. The U.N. report also added that

> The lack of due diligence to clarify and punish such crimes, and to prevent their repetition reflects that they are not perceived as a serious problem. The impunity in which such crimes are then left sends the message that such violence is tolerated, thereby fueling its perpetuation.

Some Mexicans describe the current state of society *as "a barrel of crabs: when one climbs up, the others grab him and pull him down."* Moreover, they opine, when Mexicans have an opportunity either to benefit or to prevent someone else from doing so, *many would choose the latter.* For the Mexican male, ego reigns supreme—king of the rubbish heap, proudly sinking the ship to spite the sea. Pride in failure is a national virtue.

Perhaps the most telling incident of Mexico's current state of lawlessness and official impunity is the state's investigation into the death of Digna Ochoa, a human-rights campaigner who had taken on the powers that be. Amnesty International's 2002 report stated:

> On 19 October, Digna Ochoa, a human rights lawyer who had worked with the Centro de Derechos Humanos "Miguel Agustin Pro Juarez" Human Rights Center (PRODH), was shot and killed in her office in Mexico City. A death threat was left next to her body warning members of the PRODH that they would face the same fate. Digna Ochoa had worked on high-profile cases in which members of the military and Attorney General's office were accused of serious human rights violations.

The same week, five other human-rights activists in Mexico City received death threats.

Twenty-one months after the murder of Ochoa, the Mexico City attorney general of justice ruled her death—*by two bullets*—a suicide. Media reports circulated the government's conclusion that she was emotionally unstable and had a history of psychiatric problems. In the official story, she wrote the death threat herself, knelt on the floor facing a couch, then shot herself first in the femur and then in the head.

Americans must ask themselves if they want to maintain the diplomatic facade that our countries are "partners and amigos." Mexico's ambassador to the United Nations, Adolfo A. Zinser, was recently re-

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called for stating publicly that the United States has looked at Mexico "*as its back patio*." National media lambasted him for offering an opinion contrary to Mexico's official policy of "friendship and cooperation" with the United States.

For Mexicans to imply that they are our sociocultural equals, however, is a rather long jump from the dysfunctional reality of their society. Stupid is as stupid does; if Mexicans wish to behave as *Untermenschen*, they should expect to be treated accordingly.

* * *

Four months after this article was originally penned, the Morelos state government of Sergio Estrada Cajigal Ramirez (of the PAN/Partido Accion Nacional/ National Action Party) faces the possibility of total collapse, because of official connections with the Juarez cartel of narcotraffickers. PAN candidates (including President Vicente Fox) rose to power in the 2000 elections on a platform of ending corruption, but their actions have given the lie to their rhetoric.

On April 6, the Mexican Attorney General's Police arrested Morelos Police Chief Jose Agustin Montiel Lopez and sub-director Raul Cortes Galindo and charged them with heading a protection ring for the Juarez cartel. Montiel and Cortes protected twice-weekly flights of drugs from Colombia to state and regional airports in Morelos and provided the transshipments with Ministerial Police escorts on the interstate toll road. The video surveillance cameras at the toll plazas turned off when the convoys went through.

Estrada Cajigal denied links with narcotraffickers and involvement in the circle of corruption around him, but former Ministerial Police officers Idelfonso Ortiz Alatorre and Marco Enrique Yepez Uribe, now imprisoned, testified that Estrada Cajigal was a virtual employee of the Juarez cartel and that State's Attorney for Justice Guillermo Tenorio Avila was a key figure in arranging the "settling of debts" between federal and local officials and narcotraffickers. They and other witnesses have further declared that Governor Estrada Cajigal is romantically involved with Nadia Patricia Esparragoza, daughter of Juan Jose Esparragoza Morenos, one of the Juarez cartel *jefes*. The PGR stated that Nadia Esparragoza is the "key link" between public officials of Estrada Cajigal's administration and the Juarez cartel. (Nadia Esparragoza enjoyed Ministerial Police escorts in Morelos.) Another critical link is the official police protection of Anibal Carillo, cousin of Juarez cartel boss Vicente Carillo Leyva, revealed in the testimony of Agustin Montiel and former commander Alberto Pliego Fuentes, now both imprisoned.

On April 12, Governor Estrada Cajigal ordered the disarmament and removal of the entire force of Ministerial Police and their replacement by Federal Preventative Police, forces of the Mexican army, and new police-academy graduates.

On April 14, ex-State's Attorney for Justice Alejandro Hernandez Arjona was arrested for his involvement in the assassination of drug dealer Benjamin Gomez, allegedly ordered by Governor Estrada Cajigal.

As the political crisis unfolded, State's Attorney Tenorio Avila resigned on April 17 as demanded by the state Congress. Estrada Cajigal's "strong man," Morelos State General Secretary of Government Eduardo Becerra Perez, followed suit two days later.

On April 21, the PGR reopened an investigation into Estrada Cajigal's possible involvement in the murder of Gomez and of ex-coordinator of the Ministerial Police, Luis Alain Pano Vega.

The evidence against Estrada Cajigal goes beyond political affiliations, directly involving family as well. Estrada Cajigal's ex-father-in-law, Enrique Barting Diaz, director of the Tetlama Airport, and brother-in-law Gerardo Gomez de la Borbolla have been implicated in the narcotrafficking scandal by allowing drug flights to land on protected runways, according to witness testimony. Morelos State Secretary of Government Eduardo Becerra—a former auto-repair shop owner like Estrada Cajigal—and former Becerra employee Gomez de la Borbolla have also been implicated in a car-theft ring that stole luxury cars to trade in Central America for cocaine. As David Aponte of *El Universal* writes ("The File of the Governor's Brother-in-Law," April 22):

> The Morelos Government never went deeper [in investigating] the links between Gomez de la Borbolla and . . . [Jaurez cartel boss Carillo Leyva's cousin] Anibal. Montiel never arrested [Anibal Carillo] despite a rap sheet for fraud since 1994. Everything stayed in the family, between friends, among the protected.

The Morelos state Congress proposed to try Governor Estrada Cajigal, which was nearly assured until the April 22 defection (ostensibly after the receipt of $200,000, according to his former party colleagues) to the PAN of PRD representative Juan Nolasco Sanchez, a swing vote that altered the balance of legislative power.

V. Groginsky writes from Mexico City.

Letter From Italy

by Alberto Carosa

"Peaceful" Immigrants

◆

The Catholic Church as a whole does not support illegal immigration, at least in principle. However, an increasing number of clergy and prelates, especially in Italy, do grant *de facto* support to illegal immigration. For example, the bishop of Caserta, Msgr. Raffaele Nogaro, was one of the first high-ranking prelates to support a protest by three Combonian missionaries and a nun who, in early June, chained themselves to the gates of the police headquarters in this city in Southern Italy near Naples. They demanded that any efforts to deport illegal immigrants be immediately halted. Their protest has expanded to at least 17 cities, including Rome, Florence, Bari, Milan, Palermo, Benevento, Avellino, and Naples. It is now supported by nine bishops, including Milan's Dionigi Cardinal Tettamanzi, and at least 33 religious-related NGO's. Some of the clergy are calling for illegal immigrants to be offered shelter in churches, monasteries, and other religious institutions.

The Vatican has also weighed in on this heated immigration debate, which has split the center-right government of Premier Silvio Berlusconi, by reminding politicians that immigrants need to be treated with respect and compassion. Msgr. Agostino Marchetto, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Refugees, told the press that it is a "political duty to regulate immigration but a Christian duty to help those who suffer." He stressed that, although the Catholic Church does not support illegal immigration, she regards respect for the dignity of immigrants as a fundamental part of

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immigration policies.

Reform and Devolution Minister Umberto Bossi's party, the devolutionist Northern League (commonly known as "Il Carroccio"), has threatened to pull out of the governing coalition if Berlusconi does not do more to halt the surge of arrivals on the country's southern shores. The League, which is often criticized as anti-immigrant, regards cracking down on illegal immigration as a fundamental part of its pact with voters and with the other parties in the governing alliance.

The League helped write Italy's (at least nominally) tough immigration legislation in 2002 but has since complained that the government has dragged its heels on introducing key measures. It is also furious over the surge in the number of immigrants who have been arriving on Italian coasts, in particular on the island of Lampedusa to the south of Sicily.

Bossi triggered a political storm by saying that "The navy and the coastal guards should defend our coasts and use the cannon," although he later sought to distance himself from these comments. "We are a populist party, we go around and listen to what people have to say and the people get angry when they see these thousands of immigrants arrive," Bossi said.

In addition to calling for the resignation of Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu, League House whip Alessandro Cè lashed out at the Church and Catholic relief organization Caritas, saying they were among those who "betray the population by appealing to silly 'enlightened' principles." On June 26, 2003, the official Vatican daily *Osservatore Romano* ran a scathing response: "Yesterday was a black day for the Italian parliament . . . it is difficult to remember when there has ever been such a detailed attack on the church which is busy trying to serve those who are less fortunate."

Il Giornale reported (June 27, 2003) that Cè also blamed the postconciliar Church for Her stand on immigration, and, in this, he enjoyed the support of his party colleague and deputy, well-known young Catholic traditionalist Federico Bricolo, who, more specifically, pointed out that "new, 1968 revolution style priests were born of the Vatican II" and, therefore, "only the return to tradition could save the Church." Needless to say, these statements further exacerbated the political climate, unleashing a storm in government and opposition ranks alike.

The Northern League's all-too-easy success in attacking the so-called religious freedom bill, now tabled in the Italian Parliament, has increased the League's unpopularity with the religious and political establishments. The real aim of this bill is to put Islam on the same footing as other faiths, especially Christian religions, which can strike accords with the state and receive public funds.

The Northern League's success resulted more from a series of disquieting events than from its disproportionate clout in the government coalition: the removal of an imam who was accused of inciting and extolling violence in his sermons; a spate of terrorism-related arrests around Milan, including the arrest of the imam of Gallarate; and the July 8, 2003, prosecution of 35 alleged terrorists, including the imam of Milan's Islamic center in Via le Jenner, who were ordered to stand trial on December 9.

In today's climate, excerpts from a sermon by an imam in which Allah is implored to "destroy the houses of the enemies of Islam," "allow Islamic fighters in Palestine, Chechnya and elsewhere in the world to triumph," and "help us annihilate the enemies of Islam" may not sound shocking. The problem is that these words were not uttered in a remote mosque in Sudan, Saudi Arabia, or Pakistan but in the main mosque of Rome in the Monte Antenne area, which is the largest not only of the 215 mosques in Italy but of all the mosques in Europe, the construction of which was justified by appeals to the need to foster dialogue, peace, and fraternity with Islam. After these inflammatory messages were reported in the media, Minister of the Interior Giuseppe Pisanu had no choice but to ask for the imam to be removed and for all other mosques in Italy to be "purged of all those who preach violence, seek recruits for 'holy war' or act as agents for foreign interests in Italy." Two days after Pisanu's statements, the imam was removed. The Monte Antenne mosque falls under the aegis of the Islamic University of Al Azhar in Cairo, and the imam's replacement will have to come from there.

According to the postcommunist mayor of Rome, Walter Veltroni, "the imam suspension is a gesture of great responsibility and sensitiveness which can contribute to ease a possibly tension-laden climate" (*Il Messaggero*, June 14, 2003). This might have been the case had the imam been removed on the initiative of the Islamic community before his incendiary sermons caused such a stir. Instead, Al Azhar has issued a press release defending the removed imam, saying that he was not extradited by the Italian authorities but had to leave because of the campaigns waged by the media against him. This measure, the statement continued, was taken only "to extinguish the fire of the debate," since Al Azhar is of the opinion that "the sermons by the formerly Rome-based imam for the Jihad to be invoked against Islam's enemies have nothing against religion and he has the right to continue his mission in another country."

These developments not only confirm the League's fears but vindicate the alarm sounded by Centro Culturale Lepanto (CCL) at the time of the opening of the mosque in Rome ten years ago, which was hailed as a milestone in Islamic-Christian dialogue. The dangers posed by its presence right in the heart of Catholicism, including the possibility that it would be used as an outpost of terror propaganda (Islam admits no distinction between the religious-spiritual and temporal-secular realms), were forcefully decried in a national campaign. This campaign soon assumed international proportions, following the turmoil caused by then-speaker of the Lower House Irene Pivetti, who heeded the call by CCL and joined its members and supporters in a rosary of reparation in the nearby church of St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

Some imams do not limit themselves to preaching. According to Minister Pisanu, as reported by ANSA (June 12, 2003), "terrorists are often able to hide themselves using illegal immigration networks and sometimes find shelter or at least some form of hospitality and varying levels of sympathy in Italian mosques." This appears to be the case with the other two imams mentioned above, who are accused of being involved in a range of crimes, including supporting and financing terrorism, aiding illegal immigration, tax fraud, and receiving stolen cars. In particular, the arrest of the imam of Gallarate, Muhammad El Mahfoudi, has caught many by surprise, because he is said to be a staunch supporter of interreligious dialogue. Incidentally, the first Al Qaeda-linked cell in Italy was discovered in Gallarate.

Alberto Carosa is the editor of Famiglia Domani Flash, *a pro-family newsletter published in Rome.*

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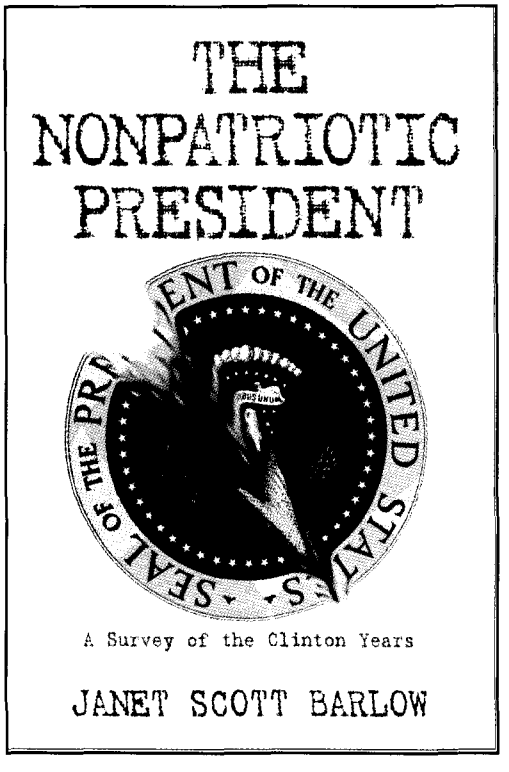

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THEATER

Delightful Murders and Sheer Torture

by James Moses

While "off Broadway" is often the destination for the worst sort of stage-direction anarcho-anachronism, with *Othello* in spaceships and all-lesbian versions of *Macbeth*, it may surprise the non-New Yorker to learn that it is often the place to discover classic drama played absolutely straight (in all senses) and flawlessly acted.

Such was the case recently with a production of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, presented by the Kings County Shakespeare Company at Brooklyn's St. Francis College. The play, first staged in 1614 at the Blackfriars and Globe theaters, has since become the most-performed non-Shakespearean tragedy in the English language. Based on a true story about an Italian duchess who suffered a cruel fate at the hands of her two brothers, Ferdinand and "the Cardinal," for secretly marrying beneath her station, the drama contains at its core a triangular relationship between the Duchess, her steward-husband Antonio, and Ferdinand, who is captive to an incestuous passion for her.

The Duchess is a "right noble" woman, whose "discourse," Antonio claims, "is so full of rapture / You only will begin then to be sorry / When she doth end her speech," and her "days are practiced in such noble virtue / That sure her nights, nay more, her very sleeps, / Are more in heaven than other ladies' shrifts."

In the Kings County Shakespeare Company's production, the role of the Duchess is played by Renee Bucciarelli, a "right noble" woman herself, who, had she lived in the age of the madrigal, would certainly have inspired the full flowering of that art. The Duchess of Malfi is one of the greatest (and, likely, the earliest) of the great romantic heroines of English drama—impulsive, impatient of social proprieties, warmly elegant, and profoundly feminine—and this is an actress who realizes all of these attributes to perfection.

The other star is Juilliard graduate Matt D'Amico as Bosola, the henchman of the brothers, who covet their sister's inheritance. D'Amico pulls off the neat trick of being simultaneously slimy and sympathetic. Once he has been the undoing of the Duchess, her husband, and her children, he expresses heartfelt remorse for his base deeds. Bosola is both part of the action and outside it, villain and avenger—and even impresario, since he opens four, and closes five, scenes in the play. From being the brothers' hired spy and executioner throughout most of the story, he becomes, in its waning moments, the avenger of the sister's wrongs.

A veteran of Shakespearean drama, Jon Fordham is the cold, heartless Cardinal, while Ferdinand is played by Andrew Oswald. The latter's rage throughout is the fire to Fordham's ice.

More so than that of other Jacobean dramatists, Webster's art seems continually to shift perspective, which can make the artistic unity of his plays difficult to define.

One who had no trouble defining Webster was Bernard Shaw, who contemptuously dismissed him as "Tussaud laureate." He saw the playwright as an exploiter of sensational violence who pandered to his audience's basest voyeuristic instincts. In the film *Shakespeare in Love*, John Webster is the gruesome little boy who finds the Bard's plays not sufficiently bloodthirsty.

Indeed, I have it on good authority that some modern stagings have been quite colorful, with blood gushing everywhere and chained women with bared breasts. In this production by Jemma Alix Levy, only the stage is bare, with hardly a piece of furniture set down among the players.

However, placing madness and murder at center stage (the play concludes with a stage-clogging, five-corpse pile-up) should not give offense. Webster's works are vital, at times excessively so. His world is inhabited by people driven, like animals, only by their instincts. In the case of Ferdinand, the twin brother of the Duchess of Malfi, Webster collapses the divide between human and animal when Ferdinand's wolfish instincts transform him outright into a *lycanthropos* (a "wolfman").

Webster admitted that *The Duchess* presents "a gloomy world," and its gloom emanates from Italy, a convenient punching bag for many English playwrights, who portray Italy as a sink of iniquity, depravity, and corruption, both religious and sexual. It is not the Italy of their own 17th century, baroque and Spanish-dominated, that they describe but the Italy of the 15th century. In the end, though, Italy and Italians stand less for a real country and her people than for a climate of feeling and action.

Soon after my enjoyable experience of theater in Brooklyn, I ventured back into Manhattan for what might be termed a "subversive" production of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. *New York Times* theater critic John Rockwell has assured us that "some 'subversive' productions are brilliantly unforgettable, like [Robert] Wilson's account of 'A Dream Play' three years ago at the Brooklyn Academy." (Several years ago, I found Wilson's "subversion" of Lohengrin on the Metropolitan Opera stage "unforgettable" for the way in which he had the lead singers refrain from even the slightest interaction with one another.)

According to Rockwell, "Mr. Wilson revealed facets of Strindberg that Strindberg could never envisage, making for a compelling dialogue across time."

Well, in this production in a tiny theater converted from an office space near Times Square, facets *were* revealed, but not those of Strindberg. They were, rather, the exposed breasts of Cleveland, Ohio's own Miss Julie Saad, acting in the title role. Why Miss Julie's "Miss Julie" had to appear topless, I cannot imagine, but, then, neither could I imagine what predisposed the company founded by this sylph-like redhead, the inaptly named "Blush Productions," to set this 19th-century Swedish play, about the master-servant divide and the clash of the sexes, in New York City on the Fourth of July with the cast and audience anticipating the approach, not of Miss Julie's aristocrat father, but of her Hollywood-director dad. Throw in a reference to a pet rabbit needing an abortion, and you have 90 minutes of incessant torture.

Which is too bad, because Strindberg is a towering figure in world drama. He was alternately a Darwinist, Rousseauist, Socialist, Nietzschean, and Christian mystic; but, whatever his transformations, at the core was an immense personality: sensitive, irreconcilable, occasionally

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self-torturing and melancholy. *Miss Julie* contains a remarkable theoretical introduction, in which Strindberg explains his new naturalistic form of the drama: The consistent development of character should be eliminated, because moderns are complicated and vacillating and should be presented as such on stage. Dialogue should be natural and interrupted, as in reality, by sudden thoughts and associations.

The plays should also be short, and *Miss Julie* has a concentrated plot: On a midsummer eve, the young noblewoman Julie is drawn into a love affair with her servant Jean, played here by Bryen Luethy, a junior actor who, unfortunately, gets Strindberg as wrong as does his costar.

Miss Julie falls under his power (at least, that is what happens on those occasions when there is a powerful actor opposite her) and can atone for her shame only through suicide.

The action of the play is continuous. Strindberg was developing a theory that the division of the play into acts with the necessary fall of the curtain shattered the illusion. He even complained that intermissions were only an excuse for the bars to make money.

On this night, I dearly wished that the Common Basis Theater had a bar. Nonetheless, I stuck out to the bitter end this supremely irritating rendition of a classic play, starring and produced by a native of the Buckeye State, a territory of the heartland that had transgressed even more egregiously against New Yorkers and other decadent Northeasterners by stupidly shutting down our power grid. As such, I emerged into the bracing night air to regain my sanity.

Up to a point. Walking the route back to my apartment, I passed the headquarters of Fox TV, whose news "crawl" around the building reported that, earlier that day, "Baddies" (the actual word) had done something "bad" to the occupying power in Iraq and that George W. Bush had manfully asserted in an address in Washington state that "I will do my utmost to protect the salmon of the Pacific Northwest"—no doubt the linchpin of his "No Coho Left Behind" policy.

Webster, thou shouldst be writing at this hour. You could skewer their pretensions and their hypocrisy in Act I and, by final curtain, run all of them through with a sword.

James Moses writes from New York City.

CHRISTIANITY

Mushy Ecclesial Thinking

by Mark Tooley

National headlines greeted the recent acquittal of a lesbian United Methodist minister by a church court in Washington state. Is America's third-largest religious denomination going the way of the "gay"-friendly Episcopal Church, secular reporters wondered?

The answer is: *probably not*. The trial of the Rev. Karen Dammann was more a reflection of liberal and demographically dying Methodism on the West Coast. The church's growing areas in the South and overseas show no sign of compromising with the times on the issue of homosexuality. Dammann's acquittal, even after she "married" her female companion in Portland in time for the trial, will only help conservatives in the church as they seek to bolster policies against homosexual clergy.

The trial however, cast a spotlight on mushy ecclesial thinking and the flabby reasoning of the *Zeitgeist*, which demands religious conformity to the latest sexual fads.

Crucial to the trial's verdict was the testimony of retired Bishop Jack Tuell, former United Methodist bishop of Portland and Los Angeles. Presented as a "scholar" on church law, Tuell claimed his 8.3-million-member denomination has no official stance on homosexual clergy. The church's Book of Discipline, however, declares:

> Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church.

Tuell mendaciously argued that this sentence does not really say what it appears to say, because it does not "declare" homosexual practice to be wrong. Instead, the first clause makes an assumption that relies on the church's Social Principles, which are considered advisory and not binding as church law. Therefore, the rest of the sentence is not enforceable.

Every governing General Conference of the United Methodist Church since 1972 has voted on this language. The prohibition language used to be found exclusively in the Social Principles. In 1998, the church's top court, the Judicial Council, ruled that the prohibition against homosexual clergy was clearly intended to be church law and should be treated as such.

To remove all doubt, the delegates at the 2000 General Conference voted to move the prohibition language from the Social Principles into the Book of Discipline's main body. This action makes Bishop Tuell's claim even more unsupportable. Even further, the Book of Discipline declares that clergy are expected to show "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness." The prohibition on homosexual clergy was reaffirmed at the recently held 2004 General Conference.

Tuell once supported the church's teachings on marriage. How did he come to help a church jury of clergy clearly already sympathetic to Dammann's cause play semantic games to justify their defiance of church law? He has explained his "conversion" in sermons over the last several years. Those sermons reveal not so much a church scholar as a wayward bishop searching for therapeutic justification for his own journey away from historic Christianity and toward cultural accommodation.

"How I Changed My Mind" is a sermon Tuell gave in May 2003 in Claremont, California. In it, he recalls as a "confession" that he helped to develop the current church law requiring "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness." He now believes that he and others involved were motivated only by "institutional protection" and fear.

Remembering his own limited contact with homosexuals throughout his life, Tuell said his stance remained unchanged when he retired as a bishop in 1992. "What is it that makes this mindset so powerful that it can last most of a lifetime?" he asked. First, most people, on the "gut level," have an "instinctive, negative reaction against homosexuality" coming from "subliminal sources." This is fueled by a "pervasive cultural taboo" in society against homosexuality.

Interestingly, Tuell did not question why there is an overwhelming—and universal—taboo against homosexuality. Traditional Christians would say it is the law of God written even on unbelieving

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hearts. How would Tuell explain it?

Second, inertia and fear of change prevent different policies and attitudes toward homosexuality, Tuell complained. He is "personally" convinced that this is what motivates most votes at church governing conventions that uphold traditional teachings.

Tuell recalled that he came to the light after retirement through his exposure to people with homosexual children who had decided they were "not good enough" to be in the United Methodist Church. The "culminating experience" for Tuell, however, was his service as presiding judge at a church trial for the Rev. Greg Dell.

Dell is a Chicago pastor whose celebration of a same-sex union in 1998 led to a trial in which he was found guilty of violating United Methodism's prohibition against same-sex unions. Dell was sentenced to a one-year leave of absence, though he remained in the church parsonage and received full salary. This trial had a "profound" effect on Tuell. Dell was a "faithful" pastor and a victim of the church's "destructive" "anti-homosexual bias."

Citing the so-called Wesleyan "quadrilateral" of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, Tuell declared that "experience trumps all the rest in questions like this." He asserted that the conversion of Methodism's founder John Wesley from an ineffectual Anglican priest to an effective evangelist stemmed from his "life experience" and not from "further reading of Scripture, nor of the church fathers, nor through the power of reason." (Tuell did admit that Wesley ascribed his own conversion to hearing a commentary of Martin Luther on St. Paul's letter to the Romans.)

"Oh, we don't neglect dealing with scripture and tradition and reason, because all of these can be enlisted in the struggle for inclusiveness," Tuell concluded. But changing the heart is a "prerequisite" for changing the mind, as it was for him personally.

In short, Tuell's reason for changing his stance on Christian sexual teaching is that he befriended homosexuals and their parents. They were kind and engaging people who were hurt and offended by the United Methodist Church's disapproval of homosexual practice. For Tuell, the solution was simple: The church must change her teaching so these people will be hurt and offended no longer.

This sermon is jarringly flaccid in its lack of theological substance and its quick dismissal of both Scripture and Christianity's continuous historic teaching on marriage and sex. A sermon of four years ago on the same topic, preached by Tuell in Des Moines, Washington, provides a little more substance.

"God is revealing new truth in many areas of life," Tuell said.

> The new thing that God is doing in our midst right now is to show us that homosexuality is not simply an act or acts of willful disobedience to God's law . . . but it is a state of being. It is an identity that God has given to some of His children.

Tuell then related this "new thing" to Scripture, reason, tradition and experience. As for Scripture, he declared that "all powerful love" overrides everything else, including "specific prohibitions in the context of the time and place and situation in which they were written." The overwhelming love of God in Christ "sweeps some specific prohibitions away, even though they are in the Bible." As examples, Tuell cited divorce, women speaking in church, and eating pork.

Concerning tradition, Tuell argued that the church has been "covering up" homosexuality or treating it as an unspeakable topic. "Our real tradition is ignorance," he surmised. Besides, Tuell remarked, Methodists once supported slavery and opposed dancing, theatergoing, and card-playing. The "capacity to change" is the noblest tradition, he claimed.

As for experience, Tuell cited the "anguish, the pain, the hurt, the suffering, the despair which harsh and judgmental attitudes can have on persons of homosexual orientation." And as for reason, Tuell asked, would God reasonably create homosexuals and then "decree that such a drive is to be absolutely repressed and denied?" He denounced this notion as "cruel" and "unfeeling."

This second sermon actually attempted some theological justification for endorsing homosexual behavior. Once again, however, its reasoning was vapid. Tuell said scriptural prohibitions can be ignored in favor of "love." He seemed to promote a pure antinomianism that ignores morality in favor of faith, narrowly conceived.

Tuell's dismissive tone toward church tradition shows shocking ignorance. Christians 2,000 years ago and 1,000 years ago were as familiar with the full range of human sexual behavior as we are today. Human nature has not changed. The historic Church, in seeking to be faithful to the Scriptures and to confine sexual expression to marriage, fully understood the uphill battle that men face against human lust. She knew, however, that it was a battle informed by and demanded by God's love.

Perhaps Tuell's argument that God created homosexuals as they are, though common almost to the point of cliché, is really his most disturbing. If God made certain people to be homosexuals, then did He not also make certain people to be adulterers, thieves, and liars? Tuell and others who make this argument cavalierly ignore Christian teachings about Original Sin, free will, and the universal need for redemption. If all of us are, by nature, already as God means for us to be, then the whole message of transformation and salvation through Jesus Christ is quite unnecessary. This is why the pro-"gay" arguments in the Church are really so subversive to the Gospel and are about so much more than simply sex.

Tuell is disappointingly similar to scores of other liberal Church leaders who, having cut their moorings loose from the historic Church, are now swaying with the enigmatic tides of secular public opinion, basing their deepest convictions on transitory experiences and the endless therapeutic need for approval from the world. The church they seek to create is feckless, powerless, chameleon-like, and ultimately empty of both serious thought and any significant number of followers.

It was this "scholar" who helped to persuade a jury that really did not need all that much persuading to ignore United Methodist church law, the Scriptures, thousands of years of Church tradition, the teachings of the Church universal, and even common sense, as they endorsed a Christian pastor whose quest for erotic fulfillment takes priority over faithfulness to the Gospel.

Eventually, demography will largely (if not entirely) solve the problem of Tuell's theology. Liberal religion is dying around the world. Historians may someday study the Dammann trial and Tuell's testimony as footnotes to that death.

Mark Tooley is United Methodist director at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

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TOTALITARIANISM

The Last *Kulak* in Europe

by Andrei Navrozov

In the autumn of 1909, a troupe of Sicilian actors, led by Giovanni di Grasso, arrived in St. Petersburg to satisfy a refined craving of the Russian intelligentsia, then widely shared in fashionable circles throughout Europe, for the experience of the primitive. Still, only a hundred or so spectators turned up to savor art at its most unspoiled, and, on that wet November evening, the main hall of Conservatory Theater was nearly empty. But in the audience was a reviewer by the name of Rozanov, and, as luck would have it, at least in my view, Vasily Rozanov was the most interesting and original thinker of the 20th century.

From the moment the curtain went up, wrote Rozanov, everyone on that stage was in a state of continual agitation. In contrast with the theater art of Russia and the rest of civilized Europe—where, over many a decade of culturally deadening stratification, acting had became, with notable exceptions, a job, a chore, and a profession—here were amateurs in the purest sense of the word. They literally shone, wrote Rozanov, and all one could think of, while watching them act their parts in the play, was sunlight. "How much sunlight!"

The title of the play was *Feudalism*, and, since I intend to address the subject of feudalism here, I will take the liberty of translating a long passage from Rozanov's essay.

* * *

"These people were small," he wrote,

> their native corner of the earth was tiny, while their great events and their important relationships with one another were tinier still. But in a single drop of water drawn from a natural lake one finds a greater variety of life than in all the barrels of tars and acids left standing in the yard of a chemical factory. After the Sicilians had departed, some hack wrote in a newspaper review that "from the point of view of spiritual development, the characters in the play, as for that matter the actors playing them, are barely above the apes." Could he really mean that when the young, unloved husband pulls money out of a dirty rag to give to his wife and recounts, coin after coin, how he has got hold of each of these gold pieces, this is zoology? And when the husband, having learned from mocking songs, and from the wife herself, that she no longer loves him and has taken a lover, is filled with despair, rage, and the remains of his still-tender love, and then proceeds to hack at a loaf of bread with a knife as if it were his rival's throat, yelling all the while, *Mangia! Mangia!*, and when the wife refuses, as she refuses him everything, and he smashes, in one great blow, all the crockery and everything else on the table,—is that the story of an ape, I ask you? Naturally, our enlightened litterateurs are no longer capable of jealousy, not only "accepting" betrayal from their wives, but yielding to them in just about everything else besides. But, at this extreme level of politeness, does not the gentleman in evening clothes remind one of chemically distilled water, of which it is said that it has neither taste, nor smell, "nor any colour whatever"? For that water is dead. It never loves, it no longer hates, it is incapable of anger, and if it still retains the ability to scribble articles in newspapers, well, what's the use of that? Are we not to shed real tears for a literature and a society condemned to wallow in this deadness?

"Whoever has never felt the pain of jealousy for his beloved," Rozanov went on,

> will feel no such pain over the loss of his nation's liberty or the usurpation of his civil rights—unless it's a brainy, lazy, bookish sort of feeling. For there is a vast difference between the agitation that stems from people's so-called theoretical convictions and the agitation that springs directly from the blood. The North lives one kind of agitation, the South another. Liberty is not always a squabble over the rights of man, drawn out like some interminable lawsuit between "the interests of the King" and those of "the Lower House"; it can sometimes come from the sheer joy of life, a surfeit of happiness, an ecstasy of being so complete that man is compelled to invite the animals and even the plants to share in it, and such liberty is born of the southern sun. Let us recall the Bible with its jubilee years, when the slaves would be set free, the creditor would forgive the debtor, and even the fields would go unharvested, but everything would be put to communal use; it is plain that this kind of liberty, liberty as the religious feast day of a nation at peace with itself, differs from the Anglo-Saxon kind, where, despite all the hard-won "rights of the Lower House" the poor must stay poor, the debtor lies in prison, the robber takes to the highway, and as the molecular structure of the nation has not changed one whit, liberty or no liberty, everything is just as it ever was.
>
> The image of the Sicilians as mere painted apes must have been suggested by the concluding scene of the play, where the husband, having finally discovered his wife's seducer, *gnaws* him to death . . . I love the moment which precedes the scene, when, grabbing him by the hair with his whole enormous hand, the avenger twists his victim's face toward his as though to take a good look. The fear and confusion in the blanched face of the trespasser, a highborn and arrogant, skirtchasing dandy, and the triumph, blended with rage, in the ruddy face of the peasant husband—these are simply indescribable. But that's only an instant, a streak of lightning before the thunderclap. Then he throws him to floor and sinks his teeth into his throat.
>
> *Like an animal*, you might say. True enough. But do we not breathe as animals, and what's so base about that? Does not blood course through our veins just as it does in the arterial systems of cows or tigers, so why grieve? Hasn't the dandy seduced the peasant girl following an instinct that reigns over the animal kingdom? For similar episodes of "seduction" are com-

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mon in our daily life, and on our theater stage, and at the most culturally elevated levels of our society, yet nobody would dream of calling our society, our theater, and our Don Juans "barely above the apes." If we can see the human in temptation, even when its consequences unfold *in modo animalium*, why should we see the bestial in vengeance, when it too unfolds *in modo animalium*? And what's our dagger and our revolver, if not a lengthening of the primeval tooth and a sharpening of the primeval claw? And is it not one and the same for the poor chicken, to be clawed to death by the buzzard or to have its head chopped off by the chef? The latter, I should say, is, if anything, more disgusting, and, for the chicken, more terrible; because it's more inescapable, because there's nowhere to run, because that's its fate. No, nature is more beautiful and more compassionate.

* * *

In 1909, Rozanov's Russia was already at a crossroads. The pursuit of Western-style liberty—which he viewed with respect but saw as characteristic of the cold and rational North—had made great strides, yet faced many of the same obstacles as the rest of pre-war Europe, obstacles foreshadowed already by Plato. Briefly, a civic society, free and prosperous when the going is good, reveals itself to be unfit for survival when under stress, particularly when the stress is an external one. And so, in 1917, Russia's constitutional democracy collapsed under the weight of the war, as Germany's would just a few years later.

Naturally, I now leave out all the rubbish that has been piling up in the libraries for the three quarters of a century since those very real events took place, the learned discussions of communism and passionate indictments of national socialism, the sensitive readings in Marx and Nietzsche, the questions beginning with "But did they really want . . . " and "Did they really think . . . " and "Did they really intend . . . " Equally, I keep myself from alluding to the many interpretations of the history of those events, be they brave, unbiased, accurate, and enlightened, or cowardly, ignorant, tendentious, and fraudulent. I make no mention of the casualty list for the whole turbulent period, known though it is to run to the hundreds of millions, and I do not propose to catalogue the mind-boggling refinements on simple death by crucifixion to which the epoch introduced its latter-day martyrs. Instead, I cut to the chase, and here we are in the 21st century, trying to focus on a single year—say, 1933. An English writer, Martin Amis, quotes the opening sentence in a book by a friend of his father's, Robert Conquest, entitled *The Harvest of Sorrow: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine*: "We may perhaps put this in perspective in the present case by saying that in the actions here recorded about twenty human lives were lost for, not every word, but every letter, in this book." "That sentence," Amis begins to calculate as he writes, "represents 3,040 lives. The book is 411 pages long."

> Horse manure was eaten, partly because it often contained whole grains of wheat" (1,340 lives). "Oleska Voytrykhovsky saved his and his family's lives by consuming the meat of horses which had died in the collective of glanders and other diseases" (2,480 lives). Conquest quotes Vasily Grossman's essayistic-documentary novel *Forever Flowing*: "And the children's faces were aged, tormented, just as if they were seventy years old. And by spring they no longer had faces. Instead, they had birdlike heads with beaks, or frog heads—thin, wide lips—and some of them resembled fish, mouths open" (3,880 lives).

"The famine was an enforced famine: the peasants were stripped of their food," Amis marvels.

> On 11 June 1933, the Ukrainian paper *Visti* praised an "alert" secret policeman for unmasking and arresting a "fascist saboteur" who had hidden some bread in a hole under a pile of clover. That word *fascist*. One hundred and forty lives.

Now, contrary to everything Amis may have heard in his youth from his father's friends, Stalin was neither a fool nor a maniac. Instead, in *my* father's memorable phrase, he was the Beethoven of power maximization. The sanguinary music he composed made him the greatest tyrant in history and his Soviet Union, the world's first totalitarian superstate. As students of political evil, we must treat his work with the greatest respect, for therein lie the germs—as a musician would say—of nearly every melody we are likely to hear in the corridors of power in our own day.

"I'm the perfect servant," says a maidservant in a recent film written by an English friend of mine, Julian Fellowes, "I have no life." By killing off a proportion of his slaves—first, in the one sixth of the world's territory he had come to possess, and then, after World War II, which he had contrived to unleash, in newly acquired territories to the west—Stalin sought to maximize the achievement of the same wholly rational aim that every employer seeks to achieve with respect to his employees, and every master with respect to his servants. He wanted them to have no life of their own. He wanted their lives to be his. For the sort of militarized society he had in mind—for the sort of dynamic totalitarianism that would subsume Western Europe and, once all of Europe's scientific and technological potential was merged with the natural and human resources already in his power, eventually conquer the world—nothing less would do.

From the very start, this first of great Stalin's great projects, making the Russian peasantry into a 100 million-strong equivalent of the maidservant in *Gosford Park*, was faced with an obstacle. The obstacle was the cow. For a man with a cow is, in the physical sense, what a man with a woman is in the realm of metaphysics. A man with a cow can milk it, drink the milk, make the milk into butter and cheese. He does not care whether he lives in Soviet Russia in the era of proletarian revolution and the first five-year plan, or in the Old Kingdom of ancient Egypt in the era of the glorious construction of the Giza pyramid and the Fourth Dynasty. When a man is in love with a woman, whatever commands, words, and ideas you direct at him go into one ear and out the other. He is a law unto himself. He dwells in an ethical universe of his own making. Similarly, a peasant who is in possession of a cow, being physically autonomous, is naturally resistant to political persuasion of any kind. He has got a life.

Stalin took away the cows, and the people resisted. Some resisted as naturally, or savagely, as the wronged husband in *Feudalism* whose conduct Rozanov had defended so poetically just 20 years ear-

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lier, though, of course, teeth and claws were no match for the bayonet and the machine gun. These vestiges of the old world—those who actually resisted, or were likely to resist, or could be suspected of being likely to resist—were honored with a special appellation, *kulaks*, meaning "the tight-fisted ones." What the *kulaks* were clutching in those tightly closed fists of theirs was the last shred of individualism, against which the initiative in question, called *collectivization*, was directed. Eventually, having taken away the houses, the crockery, the coins wrapped in old rags, the bread hidden under piles of clover, the sheep, the chickens, and the cows, Stalin would take away the wives as well, if only by making them into state informers against the husbands. Now his subjects would have no lives of their own, and the last of civilization could finally yield to the new order.

* * *

The total metastasis of civilization ended in militarization, but Stalin's success or failure in the attainment of his aims is not really my subject here. *Militarization* is a political term of my own devising for the fundamentally new kind of social organism that Stalin created, which today we mistakenly call *totalitarianism*. I say mistakenly, because militarization is but one of many varieties, or eventualities, of totalitarianism. Others are now in the making, in Russia as in Europe and in the United States.

My subject here is what I see about me in Europe, the forcible displacement of an old order by the new. As I say, this process need not immediately point to world war, nor to mass terror, nor to pandemic famine; on the other hand, one should not live in blindness to the signs and omens of epochal upheaval. The very fact that people are being loaded into cattle trains should make us aware of something untoward, even if we have not been told for sure that the trains are all northbound.

One of the more politically visible aspects of the process goes by the name of European unification, picking up on the original unification of the two Germanies engineered by the Soviet secret police and later Politburo chief Andropov, his anointed successor and later President Gorbachev, and their agent of influence in Europe, Chancellor Kohl. As a result, *pace* late Reagan-early Bush triumphalism, West Germany has become, if not exactly East Germany, certainly more like East Germany than East Germany has become like West Germany. So, too, with ongoing European unification, sprung from the same KGB mind that gave us *perestroika*; for the "restructuring" in question was conceived as a fundamental restructuring of the West (that is, of its millennial essence) in return for a superficial restructuring of the East (that is, of its professed ideology). Thus the Soviet Union did not fall, it merely brought the hereditary freedoms of Europe down to its own level and expanded westward with the new European Union.

The signs and omens accompanying Western Europe's free fall into the ideological crater left by the KGB's deliberate explosion of the myth of communism are familiar to the student of Soviet history. The freedoms of speech and expression are circumscribed, in that their value is no longer seen as absolute; ridiculous and often elaborately stage-managed bugaboos, such as the global threat of terrorism, are mounted to scaremonger electorates into relativizing other, until now sacred, absolutes, such as due process of law; taxation without representation is the order of the day, and, though the Union is still incomplete, still centered in Brussels rather than, say, Minsk or Kiev, whole oceans of capital are already being sucked out of the West by the East. In the timescale of Soviet history, Europe is now living under NEP, the "New Economic Policy," which saw the rise of Stalin and camouflaged his intentions.

Collectivization has already begun, however, and *dekulakization* is more than an unpronounceable Russian word. Wherever you look, the peasant and his cow are soon parted. Working in concert with political forces in Moscow, Washington, and Brussels, a variety of transnational superpowers—big business—are busy changing the way Europe has eaten, lived, loved, worked, thought, and prayed for a thousand years. Big business *thinks* it will rule the world, rather as successive generations of Stalin's henchmen and dupes thought that *they* would rule Russia. Alas, it would be ruled by *him*.

The title of this essay, "The Last Kulak in Europe," is intended as an echo of *The Last Man in Europe*, George Orwell's original title for the book that became *1984*.

* * *

Broadly speaking, as we can always distinguish one thing from many, we may say that there can only ever be but two basic types of social organization, the absolutist (or, under certain circumstances, "totalitarian") and the feudal (or, under certain circumstances, "democratic"). Centralization, unlimited authority over the lives of men, militarization or cryptomilitarization, and uniform disregard of individual liberties are among the hallmarks of the former; decentralization, localized and conditional authority, peaceful or pseudomilitary existence (of which what seems like the climate of continuous war in Renaissance Italy is a good example), and liberties safeguarded by local traditions or old customs are associated with the latter.

As Europe, America, and the rest of the world move closer and closer to the absolutist model—a movement in which the forward thinking of the new totalitarian rulers in Moscow and the blind ambition of the dupes of big business in Washington have worked like twin engines for nearly four decades now—national sovereignty, local autonomy, and individual independence are the principles being purged from the fabric of European institutions. It may seem that the so-called multinational interests, by virtue of being in competition with one another, would contribute to institutional diversity as feudal lords and local princes once did, but far from it; all big business, like Stalin and Hitler, pursues the same objectives and charts the same great *Lebensraum* for its own expansion. What's good for one is good for another. What's OK with General Motors is OK with Fiat; what's OK with Fiat is OK with McDonald's; what's OK with McDonald's is OK with Heinz. The business of business is business, and that's OK with the KGB.

In their inspiration, the methods used by the multinationals owe much to the Soviet past. Like Soviet dictators, they want to impose uniformity. (Apples that are all the same size are easier to pack.) Like them, they want to root out dissent. (If only one corner shop is still in business, the supermarket does not really own the town.) Like them, they want to eradicate tradition and custom. (If big chains keep their stores open on Sundays, small family stores, which cannot afford hired help, go bankrupt.) Like them, they want to do away with people's natural conservatism. (Genetically modified crops are more lucrative to grow.) In short, they want everybody to march to the same tune (if possible, the soundtrack of a Hollywood movie) and would not hes-

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itate to use terror famine (say, for now, in Africa) against those too slow to join the march.

Italy, as a geographical whole, with its remarkable history of feudal independence and anachronistic decentralization, is, in many ways, the last bulwark in the path of the absolutist leviathan. It is perhaps beyond the scope of this essay to argue about whether that leviathan's heart will ultimately be Moscow or Beijing, though I should say that it is as unlikely to be Washington or Brussels as Wall Street or Beverly Hills. What is important here, I repeat, are the signs and omens of the leviathan's progress, and Sicily is the best place in Italy to observe them.

Progress is just the right word, incidentally, because it is the term historically favored by proponents of every kind of absolutism—in politics, in science, and even in art—and used by them to describe what is, in reality, the world's inexorable slide into the totalitarian maw. And Sicily is a stranger to progress. Sicily is savage. In Sicily, husbands kill their wives' lovers with their bare teeth. Haven't you heard? Everybody in Sicily is in the Mafia.

* * *

Well, I have good news. Everybody in Sicily *is* in the Mafia. Now, of course, I do not mean to suggest that the Mafia—which is known to have existed for well over a century in something like its fictional *Godfather* form, and for very much longer in various other forms—is a reaction to the threat of European unification. But, equally, it would be foolish to represent the European Union as having just sprung from the mind of Zeus, or even from the mind of Stalin. The tyrannical notion of depriving a people of their national sovereignty, their ancient customs, and their very identity is hardly novel. It is to be sharply distinguished, however, from the idea that every conquered people will always be made to submit to the ways of the conqueror: Tatar Mongols who conquered Russia did not burn down churches, while Arab overlords in Sicily enriched, rather than diminished, the diversity of life on the island.

No, if a *locus classicus* for that notion is to be found, it will probably be found in the Roman Empire, where, for the rebel and the dissident, as Edward Gibbon puts it in a favorite passage, "to resist was fatal and it was impossible to fly":

> The empire of the Romans filled the world, and when the empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. . . . "Wherever you are," said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, "remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror."

It is above all to *this* idea of power that the Mafia, in its ideal form, was a response. The Mafia was the Resistance. It was the resistance to

> Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
> The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay,
> The insolence of office, and the spurns
> That patient merit of th'unworthy takes . . .

Yes, Elizabethan England was indeed a savage place, where sons avenged their fathers, and men knew something of jealousy and the love of one's country. In his book *Midnight in Sicily*, Peter Robb, a liberal writer critical of the Mafia, states that one, admittedly fanciful, derivation of the term *Mafia* is from the cry of *Ma fille!* ("My daughter!"), of a mother "whose daughter's rape by French soldiery provoked the uprising of the Sicilian Vespers." Another, equally fanciful but just as meaningful, explanation is that it was some kind of "political acronym from the time of Italy's unification."

I may be told that I am out to idealize the Sicilian Mafia, and, to some extent, this is true. Just as a government may be discussed in its ideal form, however, so the groundswell of resistance to that government may be discussed. Does anybody seriously believe that the communist-sponsored subversion of the Vichy in France was the work of idealistic boy scouts? Yet this does not keep us away from the cinema. Democracy in America can be discussed, and has been discussed by Tocqueville, as both what it is meant to be and what it actually is. It is not intellectually productive to look at the results of the Florida election and take the view that, *hot diggity-dog, god-darn it, I knew it all along—the whole thing's just eyewash*.

For instance, though not one to romanticize the Mafia, Peter Robb cites a passage from a compendium of legal documents entitled *The True History of Italy*, which shows that it is only in the early 1980's, with the advent of Toto Riina of Corleone, that the nature of the Sicilian Mafia began to change

> from a situation of hidden conflict inside a pluralistic organization still formally governed by democratic rules, to a strategy for the conquest of absolute power by Riina's Corleonesi, who would transform Cosa Nostra into a dictatorship, no longer founded by consensus but on terror alone, both within the organization and towards society and the state.

The very fact that such clear distinctions—like the distinction, say, between the Russia of absolute monarchy and the Russia of constitutional democracy—are not out of place in the still-recent history of an institution whose name is used to scare gullible electorates and little children should make the most rabid cynic pause a little, reflecting that perhaps he ought to keep a more open mind.

In short, let us not tar the Mafia with the Corleonese brush.

My own experience in Palermo encourages this evenhanded approach. Having lived here now for several years, I must confess that I have not made friends with a single Palermitan who does not have at least one relative doing life in prison. Do not gasp. In Russia, even for a person of my generation, it is virtually impossible to meet anybody whose family has not been unaffected by Stalin's purges. It is a truism that, in Sicily, the Mafia is a way of life.

Particularly so, I should add, for the middle classes, which is what makes it so charming, rather like the million-strong Countryside Alliance that, one fine day not long ago, triumphantly marched through London in support of fox hunting, the House of Lords, British sovereignty, and anglers' rights. The lower classes, after all, having less to lose, are always more prepared to make trouble, whether this means taking to the streets or joining a criminal gang. Anyway, not one of my friends—including the mafiosi among them—actually *supports* the Mafia; but,

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following an early indictment by the Sicilian writer Leonardo Sciascia, certainly none of them supports the government in its efforts to curb the Mafia's influence. The anti-Mafia effort is viewed as a medicine with side effects far worse than the disease it is meant to cure, if only because, to quote the killer of the legendary 1940's gangster Giuliano, "Bandits, police, state, they're all one body, like father, son, and holy ghost!"

Sicily is not the only Mafia stronghold. In the 1980's, in Campania, there were 2,621 killings, compared with Sicily's 2,905. Calabria came in third. "Pasolini came south to Naples and the Campania in the late sixties to make his film of Boccaccio's *Decameron*," writes Robb, and, of course, what he says of Naples can be said of Palermo:

> [Pasolini] came to Naples because *Neapolitans have stayed the same . . . I prefer the poverty of Neapolitans to the well-being of the Italian republic, I prefer the ignorance of Neapolitans to the schools of the republic* . . . In another piece I could no longer trace, in one of the perverse, hallucinated visions he elaborated not long before his murder, he'd spoken of Neapolitans as a people who had rejected the modern world. He described them as a desert tribe, camped in their black and red piazzas, waiting for the end, choosing to die. Wrong-headed and brilliant as ever, Pasolini didn't know the half of what was coming.

* * *

Those who have been to Palermo and have seen for themselves the urban blight of its deserted historic center, its Khrushchev-style high rises, its monstrous agglomerations of so-recently-poured-yet-already-crumbling concrete, will call me a pied piper. Is this, they will say, how your bulwark against progress works? Is this better than whatever the bureaucrats of Brussels and the gravy-train conductors of Washington and the Machiavellian schemers of Moscow have in store for us? *We'd rather live under communism than in Corleone!*

My reply is that, when you travel through Italy and see an eight-lane highway leading nowhere, or "a flyover used only by flocks of sheep" (in one writer's memorable phrase), or indeed an entire town like Corleone, you must remind yourself that the money that has been stolen here, at the cost of convenience and aesthetics, has been stolen from governments that have stolen it from the people of Italy. More important, it has been stolen for local use. It has not gone to Brussels; if anything, it has come *from* Brussels. It has not been spent on centers for lesbian awareness and black drama workshops; it has been spent on daughters' dowries and fish dinners in family restaurants. In fact, to me, Palermo looks like a restaurant table after an enormous, Rabelaisian family meal. The platters with fish skeletons, the tablecloth stained with red wine, the dirty plates full of cigarette butts and chicken bones are not pleasant to look at now, of course, but God what a dinner that was! A feast during the plague.

The reply is a bit hysterical, of course, like a 1920's fascist response to communist aggression. What can I say? The sense of political impotence is bound to produce social hysteria. For I would describe the epoch we live in as the chaos of lawlessness coalescing into totalitarian order, and I believe that, deep down, everybody shares my perception. Everybody senses that we live under laws we never made, and everybody knows *that kind of life does not go on forever*. So have a kind thought for Sicily, for Palermo, even for Corleone. They have done what they could to keep themselves, their wives, and their children out of cattle cars with *Progress* written on the side, and they have wrecked their homes and their lives doing it. Their resistance has been as savage as this land, as ineffective as a Russian peasant burning his own grain, as hysterical as Hitler's apotheosis, and, in the end, perhaps as suicidal. But they have done something, at any rate, to deter the trespasser from entering their house, which is more than any one of us is doing.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

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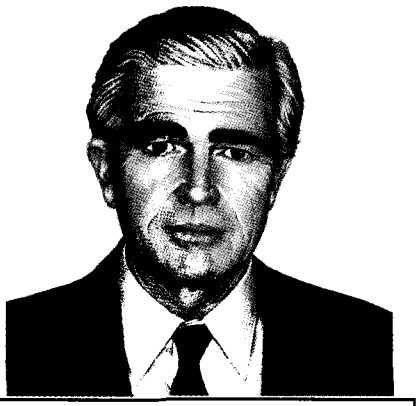
Make Mine Revenge, Please



The Punisher

Produced by Marvel Enterprises
Directed by Jonathan Hensleigh
Screenplay by Michael France and Jonathan Hensleigh
Distributed by Lions Gate Films Inc.

Man on Fire

Produced by Fox 2000 Pictures and Scott Free Productions
Directed by Tony Scott
Screenplay by Brian Helgeland from A.J. Quinnell's novel
Distributed by 20th Century Fox Film Corporation

Mean Girls

Produced and distributed by Paramount Pictures
Directed by Mark S. Waters
Screenplay by Tina Fey

Audiences love to watch the wronged get their own back, preferably in spades. So it is no surprise that revenge has taken over the screen once more. As I write, *The Punisher*, *Man on Fire*, and, in a gentler register, *Mean Girls* are all profitably if not wholesomely working the vindictive theme.

Even by the grisly standards of the genre, Jonathan Hensleigh's adaptation of Marvel Comics' *The Punisher* is inordinately brutal. It features a box-jawed, muscle-bound actor named Tom Jane playing Frank Castle, a.k.a. The Punisher. The character is supposed to be grimly obsessed with avenging the murders of his loved ones, but Jane makes him look less vindictively morose than awkwardly comatose. Maybe it is the Wild Turkey he drinks straight from the bottle after blowing away each new cadre of baddies. Give Marvel points for being politically incorrect; not every comic-book franchise would feature an alcoholic superhero in our health-conscious times.

In the opening scenes, we learn how Castle became such a remorseless alkie. On his last assignment as an undercover agent for the FBI, he set up a sting operation in which the son of Tampa crime boss Howard Saint (John Travolta) was shot to death. In retaliation, Saint has Castle's entire family killed: his wife, son, parents, uncles, and aunts, along with his first, second, and possibly third cousins. Castle, however, only sustains a volley to the chest, hardly enough to keep him down. Once on his feet again, he buys lots of guns and knives, moves into a seedy apartment in Tampa's industrial zone, and plots the demise of Saint and his minions. The rest of the film is taken up with the various ways in which he taunts Saint preparatory to the final showdown—all conventional enough but for Hensleigh's taste for sadism. For instance, how often do comic-book heroes trick their enemies into killing their own wives by fabricating evidence of infidelity? Castle does and gloats about it afterward. What's more, we get to watch the furious crime boss throw the woman from a bridge. Landing on rail tracks below, she regains consciousness just in time to watch a diesel locomotive bearing down on her now helpless body. Another scene features some nifty knife work. Castle stabs a thug under his chin, and we get a close-up of the startled gentleman gaping so that we can plainly see the blade piercing his tongue and entering the roof of his mouth. What fun!

I rarely walk out on a film, but I confess leaving this one betimes. In my defense, I knew it was about to end. Castle had just tied the wounded Saint to the bumper of a limousine and dragged him into downtown Tampa traffic. I am confident what happened next was not healthy for Saint—nor the audience, for that matter. *The Punisher* gives new luster to that overused phrase, *pornography of violence*.

Although it does not derive from a comic book, the violence in *Man on Fire* is even more cartoonishly grotesque. To avoid possible confusion on this point, director Tony Scott has added a postscript concerning the principal characters' careers after the film's ending, including one's birth and death dates. This is odd, since the story comes from a novel by A.J. Quinnell and served as the basis of a 1987 Italian film. If this belated simulation of fact-based storytelling is meant to impart respectability to this sportive essay in sadism, it is quite futile. Scott's only chance to gain respect for this junk would be to adopt Quentin Tarantino's dodge and openly acknowledge that it is nothing more than a heartlessly depraved revel in cinematic mayhem.

As it is, this film is a hideous compound of sentimentality and carnage cynically concocted to please the undemanding. That it is faring so well at the box office proves Scott and his scenarist Brian Helgeland know their audience as thoroughly as con men know their marks.

Until the story shifts into Sadean overdrive, it is all traditional Hollywood smarminess. Once upon a time, a very sad man named John Creasy came to Mexico City. His friend Rayburn (Christopher Walken) had gotten him a job. He was to guard an adorable little girl named Pita (Dakota Fanning). Her very rich parents want to protect her from the kidnappers who prowl the nasty city, preying on wealthy children. Now, Creasy was really, really sad. He had done horrible things as a CIA special operative—so horrible that he could not talk about them. You could tell he was really, really good, however, because he looked just like Denzel Washington and he read the Bible. A lot. And when he wasn't reading the Good Book, he must have dipped into past issues of *The Punisher*, because he also drank from the bottle to forget. You see, like Frank Castle, he was dead inside. But Pita is so cute and so happy and—even though her father is Mexican—so blonde that Creasy cannot help coming back to life. He even becomes her swimming coach, teaching her how to win all her races. It's Bill Robinson and Shirley Temple all over again. But then, Pita is kidnapped by thugs aided by bad policemen. You know Creasy did all he could to save Pita because he did it in skittering, double-exposed slow mo-

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tion and took four bullets in stop action. You do not get much more beautifully heroic than that.

Well, anyway, Pita is held for ransom, and, although her parents pony up the money, it does not do any good. Some other guys steal the money and kill the kidnapper's brother, and the kidnapper gets very mad and says he must kill Pita. So Creasy gets real quiet until Pita's mother asks him what he is going to do, and he tells her, "I'm going to do what I do best; I'm going to kill everyone connected to the kidnapping." You know he means business, because he buys lots and lots of guns and knives and grenades and shoulder-mounted missile launchers and things like that. And then he begins to kill the bad guys one by one. He shoots some and blows others up. There are lots of car crashes and explosions. Of course, there are also lots of what is called collateral damage, bodies everywhere and all. But that's OK. They are all Mexicans, and their city is such a stinky, icky place that they deserve it. And Pita is so adorable in those flashbacks that Creasy really cannot help himself.

How does a film like this get made? How do actors as accomplished and established as Washington and Walken agree to perform in it? Didn't they read the script before signing on? Didn't Washington have second thoughts about the scene in which Creasy encourages a kidnapper to talk by slicing off his fingers one at a time, thoughtfully cauterizing the stumps with the car's cigarette lighter lest the miscreant bleed to death? And what of the one that requires Creasy—darn rubber gloves—to stuff an explosive suppository into an uncooperative suspect's rectum? Did Washington express an opinion regarding the digital readout inserted into the frame so we can enjoy the countdown to what will, in all likelihood, prove the gentleman's final bowel movement?

Besides being pornographically violent, this sickening film is thoroughly racist. With two or three exceptions, Mexicans are shown to be either fat, nasty little people ready to commit any atrocity in pursuit of money or hopeless losers living in corrugated metal shacks. When Pita's mother, ostensibly referring to the kidnappers, furiously implores Creasy to "Kill them all," you cannot help feeling that she would be happy to include a much wider swath of the population. The poor and desperate are really too bothersome.

I was tempted at times to walk out on this film also, but its excesses were too fascinating. I watched to the end, and I am glad I did, for there is a moment of unalloyed entertainment to be found there. In the closing credits, Scott has pasted this bread-and-butter note to his hosts: "Thanks to Mexico City, a very special place." Special, indeed, if they ever let you back in, Tony.

Many reviewers have praised *Man on Fire*; considerably fewer, *The Punisher*. The critics displeased with either or both take issue with their violence in a rather listless I've-seen-it-all-already manner. With few exceptions, however, these same reviewers screamed bloody foul and worse when reporting on Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. (I just thought you should know in case you're keeping score.)

Although there's little violence in it, *Mean Girls* also concerns revenge, and a particularly nasty form of it at that: adolescent feminine revenge.

Written by Tina Fey of *Saturday Night Live*, the movie is refreshingly offbeat in its refusal to be politically correct. Fey invests her story with a feminine—not feminist—perspective. She is too much a satirist to be ideological. Her influence may also explain why director Mark S. Waters' camera refrains from ogling the young performers' bodies in the manner considered *de rigueur* in teen flicks.

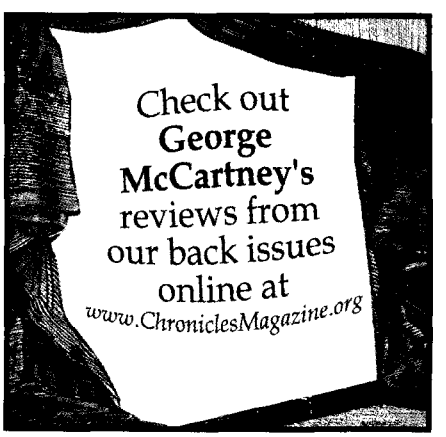
Fey's story concerns Cady Heron (Lindsay Lohan), who, after having spent most of her 17 years being homeschooled while living in Africa with her anthropologist parents, finds herself suddenly confronted with the bewildering savagery of a typical suburban American high school. A complete outsider, she is bewildered by the tribal politics of this habitat for the hormonally disturbed. She can only understand her classmates' weird conduct in terms of the monkey behavior with which she is familiar from traveling in the bush. Why do the students segregate themselves in the cafeteria? It is like the intratribal and intraspecies arrangements among monkeys. Each table has its own simian group: the computer geeks; art freaks; cool Asians; mean black chicks; jocks; and, of course, the social commissars of school society, the queen bees. The local mall's decorative pool, a favorite teen hangout, becomes a watering hole before Cady's imaginative eyes, and the kids transform into a panoply of thirsty monkeys, preening, scampering, chattering, and yipping in a boisterous carnival of unrelieved mischief.

On her first day in school, Cady finds herself adopted by two art freaks who, being outsiders themselves, alert her to the perils of the adolescent wild. When she is later courted by the queen bees, her art friends encourage her to become "a spy in the enemy camp" so that they can get revenge on these upscale, sneering prima donnas. And revenge they get—and quite a bit more—when Fey forsakes her usual tartness and turns gently didactic in her overly sweetened conclusion.

Other than its anthropological premise, Fey's plot is fairly standard. Her throwaway observations, however, are fresh and telling. In Sex Ed class, the school's portly coach sweatily exhorts the kids, "Don't have sex; you'll get pregnant and die!" He then holds out a carton of condoms for anyone interested. Cady is repeatedly warned that it is "social suicide" to excel in math. In the background of one scene, the seven-year-old sister of one of Cady's friends watches an ad hawking the noxious *Girls Gone Wild* videos and innocently lifts her jersey over her chest. No one notices. Maybe that is because her mom is preoccupied with her own breasts. She has just had a "spectacular boob job." She is also too busy offering her older daughter's boyfriends sustenance: "Something to drink, a snack, a condom?" When the dimmest of the queen bees is upbraided for kissing her cousin, she daffily retorts, "Well, he's only my *first* cousin."

While exposing the inanities of our youth culture, Fey also makes a good, if unintentional, argument for keeping boys and girls apart while they are at their lessons. She knows that aggravated hormones baffle the brain, yielding the field to all kinds of silliness.

With the commercial success of *Mean Girls*, we can look forward to more of Fey's tonic vision. That's a blessing. ◦c



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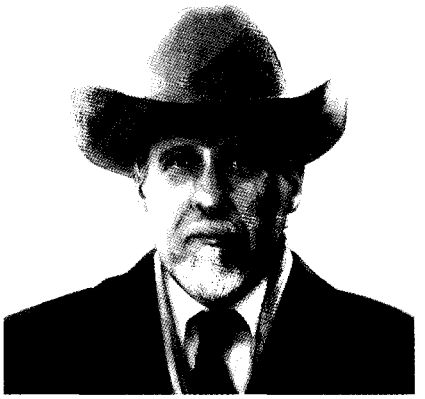
by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Leftist Rage, Conservative Hate



Years ago, when we were very young and contributing promiscuously to the reviews departments of various intellectual publications, a misguided editor sent me a review copy of a leftist rant by an author whose name I have long since banished from memory, while clearly recalling the title. It was *The Dying of the Light*—taken, of course, from the Dylan Thomas poem, a stanza of which was chosen to serve as an epigraph: "Go not gently into that dark night / Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Lost to memory also is the identity of the Good epitomized for the writer by the Light—the Spirit of Liberalism, I suppose, or the Rights of Man as established in 1789.

What did make a lasting impression is the use in context of the word *rage*, obviously considered by poet and author alike as a fine, even a noble, thing. According to the Chinese proverb, "So long as a man is angry he can't be in the right." Rage and hate both are aspects of anger. They are not, however, equivalent. "I love a good hater," said Samuel Johnson. He meant that hate implies a corresponding love, which responds reactively to its threatened opposite. For a man to hate, he must first love; and he who loves, inevitably hates. Hate is a directed thing, focused like a laser beam. By comparison, rage is undirected, unfocused, generalized, indiscriminate—an adult tantrum. "Rage," Ernst von Feuchtersleben thought, "is a vulgar passion with vulgar ends." Thus it is with good reason, if poor judgment, that the left boasts of the "rage" it nurtures in its bosom, while denouncing the "hate" it relentlessly discovers on the right.

Probably there is no genuinely conservative organization, whether in America or Western Europe, that by now has not been publicly identified as a "hate group" by one or more of the leftist mastiffs self-appointed to police the public square in search of dragons to slay. This is understandable. The left, despising all that exists, or ever has existed, loves nothing: Therefore, it rages. The right, from its grateful appreciation of what is (and was), loves much: Hence, it hates. "Whoever hateth his brother is a murderer," warns Saint John. But Dr. Johnson did not have murder in mind when he spoke of good hating, any more than Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center spoke from the Love that is God when, in a recent outburst, he attacked the restrictionist faction within the Sierra Club for opposing mass immigration to the United States. "They want to keep America white," Mr. Dees charged. The inference is that Morris Dees wants to turn it brown, black, yellow, and red—surely not out of love for America or his fellow Americans, against whom he habitually rages.

The rage motif has been a staple of Western culture since the 1960's. For half a century now, it has been associated with the liberal and the radical left, which has never hesitated to claim it, proudly and defiantly, as its hallmark. Anti-abortion, pro-war, and so-called majoritarian activists could never have conceived anything like the "Days of Rage" rampage in Chicago in 1968, not because they are incapable of violence but because their demonstrations characteristically are expressions of discriminate and focused anger, not of indiscriminate, inchoate, and nihilistic fury. Conservatives may have lost, along with their intellectual grasp on reality, the habit of thinking straight, but they are mostly capable still of *feeling* sanely. "Anger is a brief lunacy" (Horace). By comparison with the left, the right has managed, for the most part, to retain emotional sanity, at least.

That staunch Old Believer, Edward Abbey, complained shortly before he died that everything he valued and cared for in the world was not merely under assault but apparently doomed to extinction. In his review of *Desert Solitaire* at the time of the book's publication in 1968, Joseph Wood Krutch described it as "a hymn of hate." Krutch could have, with equal plausibility, called Abbey's masterwork "a hymn of love." Edward Abbey was a good hater of the rapacious industrial-consumerist system he despised in proportion as he passionately loved the natural world that system is bent on systematically destroying. Inevitably, therefore, this lifelong self-considered liberal was a marked man by the time of his death in 1989, attacked by his politically correct enemies as a racist for opposing Third World immigration and a male-chauvinist pig for mocking "wimmen's liberation," which Abbey viewed as another aberrancy created by a perverse social and economic setup. "Our only hope is catastrophe," he believed. Yet this very angry, though also good-natured and humorous, man never stooped to rage against the world, being too old-fashioned a liberal—and far too good a writer—to do anything so stupid, childish, and crazy.

Joe Sobran, with characteristic cutting clarity, has observed that one cannot "tolerate" what one likes but only what one dislikes. In demanding toleration for *everything*, the left assumes on the right's part a cultivated dislike for *almost* everything. Since, for the left, majoritarian distaste or even want of sympathy for minorities (*e.g.*, immigrants, homosexuals, feminists, Muslims, Jews, blacks, *etc.*) is always the equivalent of "hate," hate necessarily appears to leftists as the universal reality stretching like an arid and infinite plain beyond the shining walls and towers of the New Jerusalem.

A profound and fundamental difference between left and right is that the one tends to think and to feel reflectively, the other reflexively. The distinction is between what Oakeshott called "*the reflective application of a moral criterion*" and the "habit of affection and behavior." Another way to put this is to say that leftists react ideologically; rightists, viscerally. *Visceral* is an ugly-sounding word connoting the most primitive and violent instincts. Yet, as a barbaric, destructive force in history, visceral thinking cannot compare with thinking of the ideological variety. What leftists decry as conservative "hate" is actually resentment of, and resistance to, the intrusion of the alien and the displacement of the familiar by the unfamiliar, the old by the new, the traditional by the untraditional, the

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orthodox by the unorthodox, the proximate by the distant, the particular by the universal. Leftists misinterpret conservative hate because they cannot understand it, and they cannot understand it because it is incomparably less radical, thoroughgoing, vicious, and nihilistic—in a word, ideological—than their own vaunted rage. The leftist perception of rightist "hate" is a classic example of what the Freudians call "transference," by which you automatically ascribe your own motives, sentiments, and thoughts to someone else. If conservative "hate" were what Morris Dees and Alan Dershowitz think it is, Dees and Dershowitz would not be the millionaire celebrities they are: They might not, indeed, *be* anymore. Jews in America would long since have been rounded up and packed off to concentration camps in the Aleutian Islands; black slavery would have been reinstituted in a reconstituted Confederacy; the Indian tribes would have been exterminated, and their reservations seized; homosexuals would have been gassed in their bathhouses; women would be denied suffrage along with the right to an abortion. The presumptively hate-filled majority remains the majority, after all, and so there is no good reason why it should have tolerated the social devastation that the left has accomplished in the last 150 years. No reason, that is, beyond the fact that conservative hate lies in another moral dimension entirely than that occupied by leftist rage.

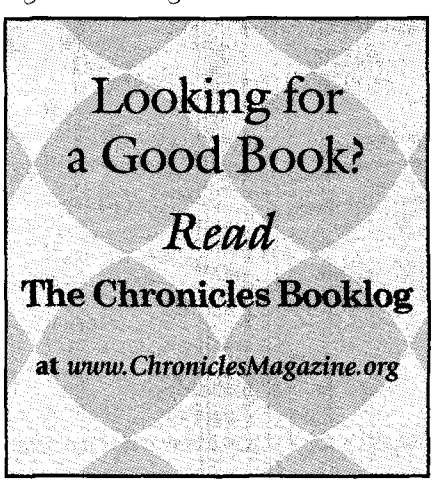
The left is offended by, above everything else, the intransigent fact of the metaphysical reality it in certain moods denies, at other times defies, and always despises. After reality, the continued existence of a right (no matter how relatively "right" it may be) incites it most efficiently to rage. If leftists "hate" anything, that thing is rightists—and with a rage that surpasseth understanding. The purpose of leftist witch-hunters who make a (typically very good) living by identifying "hate groups" and publicizing their existence is not to perform an act of good citizenship by setting the public record straight. What they intend is to brand these organizations and the individuals who comprise them as public enemies, thus marking them for liquidation come the revolution they are working for and fully expect in the long run. Whoever thinks otherwise has failed to understand both the history of the 20th century and the moral nature of the left.

"Hate," which leftists view as a peculiarly egregious symptom of moral and social perversion, is, in revolutionary times, simply an expression of sanity, and even of humanity. Hatred for persons is sinful and unchristian; but personal hatred is not really the issue here. For one thing, it is a waste of time—a fact of which the great majority of resentful conservatives are aware. Even immigration restrictionists do not go about talking of how they "hate immigrants," while those who simply dislike having immigrants around are, for the most part, content to move somewhere else, as frustrated Californians have been moving to Colorado for the past decade and a half. Of course, for the left, "white flight" is unmistakably an expression of hate. This sort of luxuriant false analogy, however, is what leftists have instead of poetry, and perhaps we should leave them to it. Meanwhile, responsible anti-immigration groups (and most of them *are* responsible) go out of their way to insist that their quarrel is not with the immigrants themselves but with the policies responsible for their presence here. Policies, of course, are not self-generated by machines in government printing offices. They are created by individual flesh-and-blood persons, who may indeed be "hated" by people who despise their policies and hold them responsible for these. Hatred for traitors, quislings, opportunists, and suborned politicians, however, is not merely a human thing: It is the instinct upon which the future of self-government, free institutions, and civilization itself depends.

Leftists are quick to insist on the distinction between offensive and defensive war, and quicker still to declare their own governments guilty of the former. Yet, for the past two centuries, the left has waged unremittant offensive warfare against existing societies. "We must hate—hatred is the basis of Communism," Lenin declared. I wonder what Morris Dees would have to say about that statement. (Does he, for instance, have any neo-Leninist or Maoist organizations on his executioner's little hate list?) I wonder further what response Dees would expect from targeted victims of revolutionary hatred besides reaction, which, for the SPLC and its friends and allies, is not self-defense but hate, pure and simple. Could there be, indeed, *any* conservative response to left-wing aggression that the left would not condemn as hate, excepting immediate unconditional surrender? The answer is No, since anything less than surrender would amount to resistance, and resistance to the left, according to the leftist dialectic, is simply *another* manifestation of hate. (This, of course, is not logic; it is ideologic. That is to say, it is extralogic. As such, it is unanswerable.)

Conservatives know as little of history as anyone else does these days. Nevertheless, the right does possess a residual *sense* of history, or, anyway, of historical process. Unlike the left, it understands that history is linear and has no end, save in the eschatological sense. That is a major reason why, at this point in history, it is losing everywhere to the left, which still believes in the possibility, and even the inevitability, of triumphalism. Conservatives, paradoxically, are accustomed to thinking in terms of historical flux; if they are Christians also, they are resigned to change as being an inescapable aspect of this world that is not yet Christ's Kingdom. Resignation does not tend to promote hate, let alone rage; and here is another reason why the right is losing the apocalyptic battle. The left prevails by rage over its enemies, who, so far from being defined by hate, have shown themselves unable to hate enough. This inability has Christian roots; that is why, for certain post-Christian reactionaries, Christianity is as great (or greater) an enemy as the antireligious left—an object of the kind of hatred that truly hates.

There is something to be said for these people's contempt and anger. The world has never been in greater need of good haters than nowadays, but good hating requires more than an appropriate measure of righteous anger. It also requires probity and, above all, moral courage—which, in modern times, is not just in short supply but nearly an outmoded concept. Nevertheless, it is the right's best weapon with which to combat leftist rage. As such, it is indispensable to the retaking and rebuilding of our beleaguered civilization. ©



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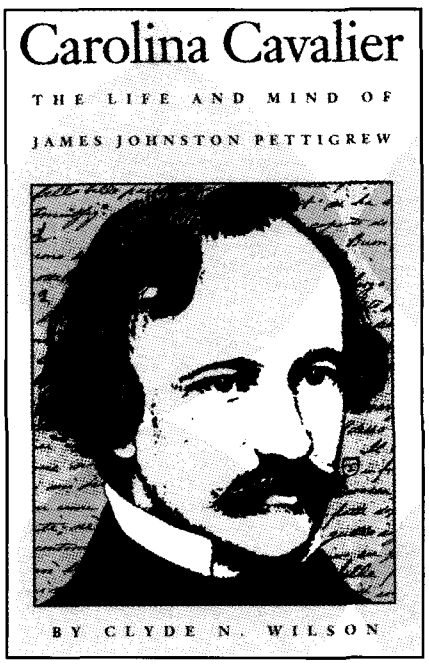

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